

# COMMUNITY CENTRES

A SURVEY BY FLORA & GORDON STEPHENSON  
FOR THE COMMUNITY CENTRES JOINT RESEARCH COMMITTEE

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RESEARCH OFFICERS FOR THE LEVERHULME GRANT FUND  
COMMUNITY CENTRES JOINT RESEARCH COMMITTEE

ROYAL INSTITUTE OF BRITISH ARCHITECTS  
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## PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION

The name Community Centre came into use in this country when the first of a series of experiments was started in 1932. The Community Centre movement grew between that year and the commencement of the war, and the number of projects was largely increased through the operation of the Physical Training and Recreation Act of 1937. This extended the powers of local authorities and increased the amount of grant aid available to them and to voluntary bodies. As the building programme increased in scope and size there was a real need for some guide to the social and physical requirements of this new type of building.

In the summer of 1939 an ad hoc Committee met at the Housing Centre in London to discuss the idea of making a study of Community Centres. A Leverhulme Grant was obtained to make possible the preparation of this survey which involved visits to Community Centres and Village Halls in England, Scotland, and Wales. Three bodies of national standing, the Royal Institute of British Architects, the National Council of Social Service, and the Housing Centre were interested in the contemporary problem and together formed the Community Centres Joint Research Committee. They decided that, despite the war, the preliminary stage of the work should be carried out as a survey of existing buildings and facilities. Later, when the survey had been brought to an interim stage, they felt that the collected information would be a valuable contribution to knowledge required for reconstruction, and that it should be published. At the end of the war, when we shall know what materials will be available and what methods of construction possible, the study will be completed.

Visiting the Centres and Halls was made difficult by the vagaries of war transport, and the work in general has proceeded less swiftly than it might have in ordinary times. The later visits and the assembling of the information were carried out largely by Flora Stephenson, because the co-author was engaged on active war work. The Community Centres themselves were in all cases affected by the war, and it was necessary to bring material up to date as the work progressed and changes occurred. Publication of the completed survey was delayed by war time conditions, and therefore some of the information on the activities and organisation of the various Centres may not be strictly current. However, it still serves as a background for the discussion of the buildings themselves which is the chief purpose of the report.



On all our visits in many different parts of the country we were warmly received by those who were responsible for the Community Centres or who were interested in the movement. We should like to express our thanks for their very kind help, not only in showing us the Centres and Halls, but in supplying information, answering questionnaires, and generally keeping us in touch with their activities.

F. & G. STEPHENSON 1942

#### PREFACE TO SECOND PRINTING

The first printing of this report was exhausted in a relatively short time. Despite a continued demand difficulties over paper supply have held up a reprint. Now this has at last proved possible. With the end of hostilities hopes for the realization of many plans for Community Centres have been raised. Numerous projects have been stimulated by the Government decision that the provision of Community Centres should be regarded as coming within the scope of the education services administered by Local Education Authorities, such provision being covered by the terms of Section 53 of the Education Act, 1944. A report, Community Centres (H.M.S.O. 9d.), has been prepared at the direction of the Minister of Education. Circulars 20, 51, 57 and 60 of the Ministry of Education urge the importance of Community Centres.

It is hoped that this survey will still be useful as a record of the many building problems to be solved and that the further report, referred to in the last preface, will soon be ready to give positive guidance to building committees.

F. & G. STEPHENSON Feb. 1946

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## INTRODUCTION

Community life has changed fundamentally in the past century. Never a static thing, the way in which people live is affected by the nature of their work and environment. Before this country changed from an agricultural and commercial economy to a highly industrialized capitalism, the forms of community life were simple and easy to understand. The towns spread about the central market place which, with the town hall, guild halls, churches, and inns were centres of life. The link between the towns and the tilled fields outside was simple. The nature of town life was such that the residents were able to identify themselves with a community which not only offered them benefits but imposed certain duties and restrictions upon them.

Village life was even less complex in its pattern. The church was again the core. The villagers' contact with the outside world came through the large landowners. Education for the majority was rudimentary and fitted them only for their hard and simple life.

Industrialism was not consciously planned and considered. Once started it developed swiftly and was seldom accompanied by a suitable physical environment. Large industrial towns grew in haphazard fashion, each enterprise concerned only with its transport, markets, and cheap labour needs. The inevitable result was comparative chaos.

Acting as magnets of ever-increasing power, the towns drew labour from the countryside. Over-crowded living conditions and a lower standard of amenities were outweighed by the higher wages and greater mobility for labour coming from a declining Agriculture. Only in rare cases were the swelling urban centres planned with regard for the comfort, health, and welfare of the industrial workers.

Some people were aware that all was not well, and reforming zeal reached a peak in the period before the last war. Numerous organisations grew up in the towns with the aim of supplying one or more of many vital needs for community life. Settlements, Working Men's Clubs, Church organisations, Boys' and Girls' Clubs, Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations, and similar groups were all working toward what they considered the physical or spiritual betterment of the individual. Their activities have often been a valuable contribution to the community, and they have helped provide facilities for town dwellers. Individual and unrelated efforts expressed the nature of this epoch.

At the end of the last war the country faced great planning problems, both economic and physical. The housing shortage was a pressing need and resulted in one of the greatest domestic building programmes in history. Four million family units were built in Great Britain since 1919, some by Local Authorities with Government aid, and others by private enterprise with or without aid from the Government. Seldom before had there been such an opportunity for planning, but unfortunately, the great suburban fringes of housing which now surround our towns were often unplanned. In nearly all instances the new housing estates developed piece-meal as agricultural land was acquired. Speculative building estates were the worst offenders, while council housing estates were in most cases a mere "twelve families to the acre" with occasionally sites reserved for schools, churches, and shops.

In these expensive new communities, peopled by families who had formerly lived in crowded towns, there was seldom even a low standard of community fac-

ilities. The residents, unaccustomed to their more spacious and polished surroundings, found it harder to make acquaintances where there was less opportunity for door-step gossiping. Active community life, in fact, was at a low ebb, and provision for any activities outside the home or in addition to work was seldom to be found except at the cinema, the public house, or in church. Conditions like these inevitably foster the tendency to passive or mass entertainment at the dog races or football matches and are a negation of neighbourhood spirit.

At the end of this war there will be an even greater housing shortage than that which we faced in 1919. The normal domestic building programme has been stopped and thousands of houses are being damaged or completely destroyed. Rebuilding will have to be carried out in a considered and orderly manner if we are to avoid chaos. Although no one can foresee what form post-war planning and rebuilding will take, it is certain that focal points of community life will have to be created.

#### War-time Community Life :

The problem of housing our population during the war years is already acute and measures are being taken to solve the problem in an immediate way. First, there are the war workers, who are needed in large numbers near vital war industries. In many cases new factories have been built in rural areas as a protection from air attack, and housing in the vicinity is totally inadequate for thousands of workers. Hostel accommodation is being provided in many instances which will virtually take the form of small towns equipped with community buildings and playing fields. It is difficult to prophesy their future but it is safe to say that they will be used for years after hostilities have ceased. The capital outlay on services and facilities will be considerable, and "temporary" structures have a long life. The residents of these war-time communities will be leading a new kind of life. Activities will revolve around a Community Centre equipped with a canteen, an assembly hall, and various games and club rooms. The effect on the post-war demand for such facilities in connection with ordinary domestic housing should be widespread.

If the air attacks on this country resume on the scale of the past year, the housing shortage will call for more immediate action. It is possible that hostel towns, of the type which are being built near the new war industries, will be one solution to the housing problem. Here again there will be a need for community buildings in the form of social centres, communal restaurants, clinics, etc., and again a new kind of community life will be created which will be considerably removed from that which was governed by tradition and slow growth.

The evacuation of women and children from danger areas is another war-time phenomenon which will create changes in the pattern of our social structure. It is fruitless to speculate now on what might have been done to make evacuation more successful by building camps for school children and hostels for mothers with children of under five. Even under the present system of billeting an important part could be played by Community or Social Centres in rural areas. As for the urban areas where many must remain, there is an increased need for Community Centres and the services which they can provide in the way of communal meals, and social or recreational activities.

#### The Community Centre :

The many individual organisations which interest themselves in the people's welfare have played an increasingly important role as populations concentrated

in urban areas. Because these various bodies have, for the most part, served different age groups and different sexes, their interests have tended to diverge. Their buildings are often planned without regard to the location of other similar facilities, or to a possible overlapping of facilities. There has been little attempt to plan for the needs of a community as a whole.

The conception of the Community Centre as the meeting place for all members of a family, no matter what discrepancies there may be in their ages and interests, is relatively new. To co-ordinate the many groups which have formerly served different ages and ideals under the leadership of a parent body whose chief interest is serving the community as a whole is a serious task. The need for such an organisation has grown out of the changing pattern of our society. The whole subject is a fresh one and it must not be assumed that Community Centres, in any form, have become part of the pattern of British life like the local school, library, or public house. The relationship to education, to the health and welfare services, and to local government is not yet clearly defined. At the outbreak of war there existed less than a hundred buildings which could fairly be called Community Centres, and all but a few were too small to serve adequately the needs of their respective neighbourhoods.

The National Council of Social Service through their Community Centres and Associations Committee have done much to further the interests of the movement. They have detailed knowledge of its growth and present state. Their particular conception of a Community Centre emphasises the need for a democratic organisation which serves all members of a community as well as those which are already grouped into voluntary organisations. A new social and cultural nucleus for community life is visualised which should be on a self-governing basis.

It is mainly on the new housing estates which have sprung up since the last war that Community Centres are to be found. A few are situated on tenement dwelling estates, and an even smaller number are to be found in old residential areas. The majority, and most of those which were being planned before the war, were an answer to the urgent needs of the new housing estates. It is in such areas that there is the greatest need for the physical accommodation which a Centre can offer and also the greatest scope for the organisation of a Community Association. The residents will have severed connections with organisations which formerly gave them their social, cultural, or recreational outlets. The complete break with former surroundings, neighbourhood meeting places, and old friends, will leave them at loose ends during their leisure hours. It is natural, therefore, for the Community Centre idea, in itself a new approach, to develop most quickly where living conditions are non-traditional.

In neighbourhoods where Community Centres were needed the action which brought them into being has come often from the residents who have formed themselves into a Community Association. Through their Association, they were able to work towards organising the local demand for a Centre, to raise funds, and to appeal for grants. In other cases the action has come from "above", either through the Local Authority or through interested voluntary organisations.



The importance of the Community Centre has been recognised by the Government and there were several pre-war possibilities of financial aid. The earliest powers of Local Authorities were conferred by the Education Act of 1921. It was the under eighteens and those above eighteen attending educational institutions, who were affected by these powers which were directed toward supplying facilities for social and physical training. Higher Education Authorities could qualify for a 50% grant from the Board of Education for any Youth Centres or Youth Sections of Community Centres which they might wish to build.

The Housing Act of 1925 opened a new source of funds for building Community Centres, but again it was a particular section of society which benefited. Local Authorities were able to build Centres on their new housing estates and to deal with the expenditure and income involved by including it in the Housing Revenue Account. Unfortunately this important step had only started to bear fruit before the war. Numerous Local Authorities were proposing to take advantage of the opportunity and a few were able to complete schemes. From the standpoint of neighbourhood planning this Act represents an important step forward because it recognises the need for Community Centres, and makes it possible to include them in the plan of the housing estate.

1937 brought to Local Authorities even more widespread powers with regard to Community Centres. The Physical Training and Recreation Act made it possible for all Local Authorities to build, in any locality, Centres similar to those which Housing Authorities were already able to build on their municipal estates. By extending financial aid to cover old and new areas of private development this Act would undoubtedly have encouraged a more general development. Another important feature of the Act was the extension of powers given to Higher Education Authorities by the Education Act of 1921 to cover adults as well as juveniles.

The Grants Committee of the National Fitness Council in charge of granting financial aid under the Physical Training and Recreation Act, was a great stimulus to the programmes of Community Associations. The importance of voluntary physical training and recreation was more fully recognised than ever before. Most of recently completed Centres include some facilities for physical training, and fully equipped gymnasias would undoubtedly have become an accepted part of Community Centre planning if aid through the National Fitness Council had continued to be forthcoming. Although the grants were available to a greater cross section of the country, the new powers were chiefly aimed at increasing facilities for physical training. There was a danger of too much emphasis on that particular aspect at the sacrifice of others which are important to the well-rounded Community Association's programme.

The traditional Village Hall is a Community Centre in its simplest form. It acts as the common meeting ground for all the varied and vital activities which make up village life. In a rural community the social events, the business of local self government and matters of social and physical welfare all become of more immediate and personal interest to the inhabitants than they do in more crowded places. The need for a building in which the pleasure or business of the community can take place has been more recognised than in urban or suburban districts. The Village Hall is usually hard-worked. In it are held the dances, whist drives, and special celebrations which make up village social life, as well as Women's Institute meetings, Men's Club meetings, and often the meetings of the Parish Council itself. In war time the Halls are pressed into service for A.R.P. demonstrations, A.R.P. posts, evacuation centres, or whatever other functions the national emergency may demand.



Village Halls are occasionally made possible by gifts from wealthy local residents, and are sometimes built from funds raised solely by the efforts of the community. More often the building funds are partly raised by the village and partly obtained in the form of loans and grants made on the recommendation of the National Council of Social Service. Financial help can be had for building new Halls, buying and adapting old buildings for use as Halls, or for making improvements and extensions to existing Halls. Outright grants come from the Carnegie United Kingdom Trustees, and the interest free loans, repayable over five years from H.M. Development Commission and the Carnegie Trustees. Such funds are available for rural communities with a population of not more than 4,000 and can still be obtained during the war.

One sixth of the approved cost is the usual amount of grant for Village Halls, while the loan can be up to one third of the approved cost. In villages with a population of less than 400 the grant can be up to one third of the first £900 of cost and up to one sixth of any cost above this figure.

To qualify for these grants and loans, a Village Hall must meet certain conditions. It must first of all be vested in trustees for the benefit of the village, and the various organisations and interests of the village must be allowed representation on the management committee. It must, as a second condition, be designed by a qualified architect, be soundly built of good materials, and be planned to meet the social needs of the village. Other conditions require a freehold site, insurance against fire loss, and responsible guarantors for the repayments on the loan.

#### Effect of the War on Community Centres :

After nearly Three years of war it is possible to form some estimate of how Community Centres are fitting into the changing pattern of life. Existing Centres have found their programmes radically altered by war-time conditions. The chief change was, at first, a loss of membership particularly among the young men. Later, as the calling up age was raised, more and more men went off into the Forces and others were too busy at war work and long hours of over-time to have opportunity to visit their Centres. In most cases this lost membership was counteracted by increased activity among the remaining members during the first winter of war. There was a normal tendency for people to seek companionship and relief from worry. The blackout seemed to be another factor in bringing members from their darkened homes to the cheerful atmosphere of their Centre.

Shortly after the outbreak of war most Community Centres had some of their rooms commandeered for First Aid Posts, Air Raid Wardens' Posts, &c. This has often meant a loss of one or more of the best rooms to the A.R.P. services. It is only natural that the intrusion was not welcomed at first, although in a few cases the A.R.P. personnel was warmly received and made to feel a part of the community organisation. Since the beginning of heavy air raids the general public has come to appreciate the importance of the A.R.P. units and most Centres are now proud to house them.

Another vital branch of war service to be found in many Centres is a local Citizen's Advice Bureau. It is often run by some of the Centre's staff who are well qualified to deal with the problems of their own members and other residents of the neighbourhood.

The normal programmes of Community Associations soon changed to fit war-time conditions. Voluntary groups were quickly organised, particularly among the

women, to do Red Cross work and make comforts for the Services. Socials and whist drives raised funds for the war effort instead of for future buildings. As the war got really under way, Community Centres like everyone else, began to feel its effects more directly. When they were located in danger areas subject to air raids, there was soon a call for their services. Many have served as emergency feeding centres, Casualty Information Bureaux, or rest centres for the homeless. Others have been taken over by schools whose property has been damaged. And a few Centres have, inevitably, been destroyed.

Air raids make after dark group activities impracticable except in properly organised shelters, and evening programmes, particularly in winter, must be cut down. Fire-watching and A.R.P. work make heavy demands on the time of those who are already working long hours. More and more women are going into industry, children of school age have been evacuated, and normal social life becomes increasingly difficult. Community Centres are showing their adaptability to war-time conditions by taking over such duties as mentioned above and by altering their programmes to meet current needs. The serving of communal meals at some Community Centres is one example of their usefulness in the present crisis.

Where future Centres are concerned, the war has changed the picture. Grants from the Government through the channels explained could not be had. The National Fitness Council which was ready to help with numerous schemes died shortly after the beginning of the war. With building materials and labour being diverted from normal domestic or commercial work to important war programmes it was only natural that the plans for building Community Centres should also come to an end. In a few cases, where the work was already under way, permits were obtained for materials and the buildings completed - only to be turned to some other purpose. In Leicester there is an isolated case of plans for a Centre to be built on a new housing estate in the immediate future. Another Centre in that town, completed just before the war, has been such a great success, that a strong case was made and permits obtained for materials.

Although peace-time forms of Community Centres will not be built, others will be, and they will be in answer to a new type of need. The Social Centres to be included in hostel schemes for war workers compare most favourably with existing buildings and include similar rooms. There is also the possibility of making the communal buildings which are included with military and other camps of such a design and construction that they could be used as Community Centres for their neighbourhood after the war. In many cases, the camps are located near suburban housing areas where their Social Centres would be very useful in post-war years. In at least one instance this idea has been successfully tried.

Each of the Community Centres described in the following pages has been chosen for discussion because it represents an outstanding or typical development.\* Chart I contains a list of these Centres and brief information concerning their location, accommodation and costs.

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\* The Peckham Health Centre is not discussed in this report because it was not built primarily as a Community Centre but was intended to be a biological experiment.



C H A R T I.

COMMUNITY CENTRES DESCRIBED IN REPORT

<u>Town or District</u>	<u>Community Centre</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Accommodation and Cost</u>	<u>Points of Interest</u>
1. BRISTOL	Filwood Social Centre.	Council Housing Estate.	Assembly Hall, Gymnasium, Common Room, Senior Section, Junior Section, Kitchen. <u>£17,500</u>	Open Courtyard plan not successful. Interior wall surfaces of painted brick. Centre used as elementary school in day, but not designed for school.
2. SHEFFIELD	Frecheville Community Centre.	First National Housing Trust Estate.*	Assembly Hall, Kitchen, Office, Games' Rooms, Common Room, Committee Room. <u>£10,000.</u>	Service Counter from Kitchen to Entrance Hall used as lounge. No separate entrance for Hall. Unsuccessful attempt at heavy plastic paint for interior wall surfaces.
3. SLOUGH, BUCKS	Slough Social Centre.	Between Trading Estate and Housing Estate.	Senior Block, Junior Block, Large Assembly Hall, Smaller Hall, Swimming Pool, Nursery School. <u>£67,000</u> (including new Hall and outside improvements and facilities)	Buildings constructed so that they can be used for factories if Centre failed. Large volume space, easily divided or re-divided on interior. Extensive use of temporary and folding partitions.
4. KENSINGTON	North Kensington Community Centre.	Privately-built tenement dwelling Estate.	Assembly Hall, Games' Rooms, Kitchen, Refreshment Room, Office, Welfare Centre, Nursery School, Common Room, Warden's Flat. <u>£20,000.</u>	Nursery School and Welfare Centre were included in Community Centre.

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\* One of few Non-Municipal housing Estates built for rent, not for purchase by occupants.

C H A R T I. (Contd.)

COMMUNITY CENTRES DESCRIBED IN REPORT (Contd.)

<u>Town or District</u>	<u>Community Centre</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Accommodation and Cost</u>	<u>Points of Interest</u>
5. EDINBURGH	Craigentinny-Loochend Social Centre.	Council Housing Estate.	Gymnasium, Dressing-rooms, Large Hall, Kitchen, Care-taker's House, Warden's Room, Boys' Club Rooms, Girls' Club Rooms, Men's Hut separate. <u>£3,000 (£2,000 on repairs.etc.)</u>	Old residence converted to Centre. Extra Men's Hut erected by men themselves. Good use of all available space.
6. CAMBRIDGESHIRE	Impington Village College.	Focal point of ten surrounding villages.	Assembly Hall, Promenade, Canteen, Class Room Wing, Adult Wing, Library, Staff Room, Office. <u>£26,656</u>	Senior School and Adult Centre housed in one building and sharing some rooms in common. Wall and floor finishes. Underfloor heating. General Plan.
7. SWANSEA, S. WALES	Townhill Social Centre.	Council housing Estate.	Assembly Hall, Gymnasium, Adult Centre, Youth Centre, Dental Clinic, Library.	Grouping of all these functions into one building. Site reserved in original town plan.
8. WERRINGTON, STAFFS	Werrington and District Village Hall.	Village of 2000 persons.	Main Hall, Entrance lobby, Cloakrooms, Kitchen, Committee Room.	Successful combination of the simple elements required in the plan. Good use of colour and materials on the interior.



## FILWOOD SOCIAL CENTRE, BRISTOL

The Filwood Social Centre, Filwood Park, Bristol, was opened in the spring of 1938 and is useful as an example of a Community Centre built by a Local Authority on a municipal housing estate. It is a new building in a new neighbourhood, and a fore-runner of many others which would have been built under similar circumstances but for the war.

Although its history is probably like that of others built under the same conditions, the Filwood Park Housing Estate has proved to be a special problem and is famous in Bristol because it was carried out in connection with slum clearance schemes. The Social Centre is located in the newest section of the estate and was intended to help in building up a sound community spirit amongst the residents. Great things were expected of it from the very first. The mere presence of a community building was expected to accomplish miracles in the way of reform. It was not generally realised that a community life would take some time to evolve, even where a fine building already existed. There was no preparatory work done on the estate before the Centre was built except that a Community Association was formed "from above". Some of the members of this Association had no vital interest in the estate, and the organisation has never flourished.

### Membership :

There are no individual members of the Filwood Social Centre. Instead a system of autonomous groups is encouraged, and the rooms are let to various bodies. The first reason for this is the character of the people on the estate, which has so far made it difficult to run the Centre on the basis of individual membership. Secondly, the nature of the building itself is such that it definitely discourages any unified community atmosphere.

People on that part of the Knowle West estate in which the Centre is located are all of approximately one economic level, and that the lowest. Both adult and juvenile activities are well represented on the programme, and children use the building as an elementary school in the day and as a club at other times.

There is little co-operation amongst adults where the Social Centre is concerned. They cannot be drawn into activities as leaders because they are not capable of doing the work and because they seem unwilling to trust one another, particularly where funds are concerned. Nearly all secretaries and club leaders must be drawn from off the estate. There are, of course, exceptions such as the Women's Co-operative Guild and the flourishing Ambulance Section. Despite the reputation of the neighbourhood, the Centre remains in excellent condition after hard use. Careful supervision and wise choice of interior finishes are responsible.

### Administration :

The Social Centre was built by the Local Authority under powers conferred by the Housing Act of 1936 and the Education Act of 1921. Joint efforts of the Housing and Education Committees made the building a reality. It has been transferred to the supervision of the Education Committee who pay the warden's salary. The Board of Education supplied a 50% grant for maintenance of the Junior Section only when the Centre was first built, but in June 1939 they took over the whole Centre. The total cost of the building was £17,500 and the cost of furnishings was £1,600.

In addition to appointing the warden, the Education Committee appoint a few members of the Management Committee. Six representatives of the Community Association and six representatives of the various groups who use the Centre are also members of the Management Committee.

The warden is in general charge of the Social Centre and his duties include the building up of new groups and activities, helping existing groups to develop work and overcome difficulties, and trying to develop friendliness and co-operation among groups. He maintains contact with voluntary bodies and tries to find voluntary helpers for the Centre. In co-operation with the health and education services and with voluntary social workers, he is also involved in general welfare work.

All charges on the Filwood Social Centre are eligible for a Board of Education grant at the rate of 50%. There are no voluntary subscriptions to the income, but about £150 per annum is received from lettings, etc. The annual gross expenditure is approximately £1,700 plus £790 loan charges. The current charges are not normal because part of the building is used for A.R.P. purposes.

#### Centre Activities :

Houses have been built by the Local Authority in Bristol so quickly in recent years that the Education Committee has not kept pace in supplying schools. A year after the Centre was opened it became necessary to use some of the rooms and the gymnasium for an elementary school.

The adult organisations which use the Centre regularly include :

- Women's Choir.
- Women's Keep Fit Classes.
- Women's Home Nursing Class.
- First Aid Class.
- Gardening Class.
- Ambulance Section.
- Co-operative Women's Guild.
- Women Pensioners' Club.
- Townswomen's Guild.
- British Women's Total Abstinence Union.
- Cosy Corner Mothers.
- Women's Adult School.
- Skittles Club.

The Youth Organisations which use the Centre regularly include:

- Filwood Boys' Club (Gymnasium, art group, football).
- Marksbury Boys' Club (Gymnasium, football, drama)
- Broadbury Boys' Club (Gymnasium, football, two club nights)
- Novers Club (Gymnasium, football, Church Lads' Brigade).
- St. Barnabas Junior Club (Church Lads' Brigade)
- K 4 Boys' Club (Gymnasium, football).
- Temple Boys' Club (Gymnasium, football).
- Filwood Boys' Brigade.
- Filwood Scouts.
- Filwood Cubs.
- St. John's Cadet Boys.
- St. John's Cadet Girls.
- Girls' Life Brigade.



Four other football clubs are accommodated on Saturday afternoon. The Probation Officers and Welfare Officer of the Education Committee both have rooms for interviewing. A large Provident Society collects subscriptions here.

The Warden has for the present abandoned any idea of doing much cultural work on this estate. Young people are the real hope of the community, but when they grow up and marry they must have a family to qualify for one of the houses. Therefore, they have to leave the estate, for a time at least, and the continuity of community life is broken.

At the beginning of the war the authorities commandeered the work shop, games room, and a club room for A.R.P. personnel. Since November, 1940, however, the whole building is used for A.R.P. at night, because all other halls and meeting places on the estate were destroyed or damaged. The entire Centre is used as a school in the day-time, because other schools have been destroyed.

Within a day or two of the first bad "blitz" communal meals were served at the Centre under the Warden's general supervision. Cooking was done by the army, and was necessary because of home cooking being impossible when all the services were cut off. As soon as gas, water, and electricity were available, the demand dwindled, and after two months no more communal meals were served. The system can be resumed at short notice when there is need for it.

Even if the building had not been commandeered for other uses it is doubtful if the usual programme could have been continued. National Service, fire-watching, and long hours of regular work make heavy demands on time, and there is little opportunity for social life. The class uniformity of the estate has shown itself plainly under war conditions, and the leaders and helpers, who formerly came from other districts, are no longer available.

#### The Centre and the Neighbourhood :

The population of the housing estate is 25,000 persons. Those who use the Social Centre regularly are drawn from within a  $\frac{1}{2}$ -mile to  $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile radius, an area which contains a population of approximately 10,000 persons. Distance of residents from their places of work is difficult to estimate but the average is probably three to four miles. In relation to the neighbourhood it serves the Centre is fairly well placed, but it might have been nearer to the heart of the estate.

There is no reasonable open space pattern on the housing estate, and what open space there is has not been related to the Social Centre in any way. There has been no attempt to make a continuous, flowing green strip which would be easily available to all members of the community and which would have public buildings such as the schools and the Social Centre incorporated within it.

#### Site Planning :

The Social Centre has plainly been conceived as a monument at the head of an axis. The site is cramped in appearance, while the green space in front of the building is cut off from it by traffic ways and rendered completely useless. As an aid to traffic circulation it is of no use either. It would have been more reasonable to use available ground as a setting for the Centre. A narrow strip of housing directly behind the building separates it from a large school. The dignity of a monumental approach has been reserved entirely for the front elevation.

The problem of circulation on the site itself does not arise, but access has not been well planned because there are too many entrances requiring supervision. During the early part of the day most of these are kept locked. Because the building fills the site very completely it would be impossible to make future changes in arrangement. Bounded on three sides by roads and the rear by a strip of housing the site cannot be extended.

#### Planning of the Building :

Many difficulties have been created in the plan of the Filwood Social Centre by adopting an arbitrary pattern which is not suitable for a building where the occupants and their activities will be changing to keep in step with the times. The open courtyard plan has resulted in what appears to be several different buildings joined together, rather than one Social Centre. Different parts of the plan are not clearly defined, but are strung out, one after another. In this type of plan the plumbing and other services are widely scattered and are therefore expensive and wasteful of space. The open courtyard increases the length of external walls and makes both the construction and heating more expensive.

In the Senior Section, there are small rooms, 30' x 20', and an Assembly Hall, 60' x 40'. Experience at the Centre has shown that there is a real need for several rooms of intermediate size, about 50' x 30'. Many of the group activities are unable to fill the Hall and cannot afford to rent it, yet they find the other rooms too small for their meetings or socials. One or two rooms, 50' x 30' would be used extensively for weekly dances, whist drives, and meetings which attract a small audience. The large Hall seats 400, and the small rooms can take 70 persons. It is felt that a room for 150 persons would fill the gap.

The Assembly Hall has a well-planned stage and dressing-rooms, and is good because it has an easily accessible separate entrance so that it may be used without affecting activities in other parts of the Centre. The cloakrooms and lavatories are smaller than those at the main entrance to the Centre, which is a mistake because they would have to deal with much larger crowds. The canteen is properly situated next to the Assembly Hall but the efficiency of the arrangement is cut down because the serving hatch is too small for its purpose.

The common room is located in such a position that it is not thought of as a natural meeting place, and is seldom used as one. The cloakrooms and lavatories provided for the ordinary use of the Centre are placed so near the main entrance that they tend to be used as public lavatories. The warden's office was an after-thought. Part of the men's cloakroom was cut off to make the office which is well situated none the less.

The type of circulation necessary in this plan is responsible to a great extent for making the building difficult to run as a Community Centre. People entering the building by any of the main entrances immediately find themselves out in the open courtyard instead of in a welcoming room from which they can appreciate the function and atmosphere of the Centre. In spite of the many entrances there is no way of segregating different groups. Juveniles cannot be separated from adults, or boys from girls. The open courtyard makes it too easy for them to wander across into each other's domains.

In peace time the classrooms were used as games or meeting rooms at night. The furnishings and equipment of the schoolrooms can be used by adults, but it is perhaps not the most suitable standard to work from in designing rooms for use by varied groups. The schoolroom atmosphere is not likely to be popular with adults.



## The Building and the Furniture :

The Social Centre is a one-storey building in brick and timber construction with a tiled roof. The exterior walls are finished in a rough-surfaced brick. Interior walls are of painted brick throughout the passageways and in all rooms except the warden's office and the main hall. In these two rooms the walls are finished in plaster and painted.

The floors of passageways and of the covered passageway around the courtyard are of concrete which has proved extremely dirty and impractical. Lavatory floors are also of concrete and the canteen floor of deal blocks. The gymnasium has a fine maple floor, but the Assembly Hall unfortunately is floored with wide deal boards which are quite unsuitable for dancing.

The internal walls of painted brick provide a surface which is extremely durable and resistant to the hardest wear, and has a pleasant appearance. Although the colours are cheerful and the surface easy to clean, the walls are disliked at the Centre. It is generally felt that they give a cold, ungracious character to the building.

The Centre is heated by a low-pressure hot-water circulating system. Hot water in the cloakrooms and canteen is provided by the same system. Cooking is done by gas.

In the Assembly Hall there are 400 green tubular metal frame chairs of the stacking type. Although they are good to look at and hard wearing, the Centre finds them noisy and ill-balanced when fastened together in fours as required by the local by-laws. Other moveable furnishings such as chairs and tables are of wood. Throughout the building, but particularly in the common room, the opportunity of making the interior more bright and homelike by choosing attractive and gaily-coloured fittings has been neglected.

### THE COMMUNITY CENTRE, FRECHEVILLE, SHEFFIELD

The Frecheville Community Centre was opened in June, 1937. It is of particular interest, first because it is on a new housing estate which has been built by private rather than public funds, and second because the Centre itself has been built by private grants. The arrangements for paying off these loans through an assessment on the house rents is unusual.

The Frecheville estate was built by the First National Housing Trust, a private organisation. Houses are slightly grander than on most council estates, perhaps because of the doubtful improvement of their appearance by bow windows and pebbledash. They are not, however, so lacking in good taste and sound construction as are so many products of the speculative builder. The gardens are particularly ample and well kept.

When Frecheville was first populated, the new residents soon realised that they were a complete unit on their own, a satellite community determined by the Sheffield Regional Plan<sup>x</sup>. The estate is separated by a short stretch of open country from the outermost fringes of Sheffield, and is just over the county line in Derbyshire. There were no local cinemas and pubs to brighten up the social life and the prospect seemed gloomy. Soon, an enterprising group of tenants banded together and began the quest for communal social facilities. They formed an association and held their first meeting in one of the houses. Later

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<sup>x</sup>Prepared by Professor L.P. Abercrombie.

they used a timber church building, and, finally, with the aid of the First National Housing Trust, secured their present premises. A strong community spirit, coupled with a will to achieve results, have always been characteristic of the estate. So, too, has the ready co-operation of the First National Housing Trust.

#### Membership :

All residents of the estate are automatically members of the Community Association. The estate is by no means a slum clearance scheme and every type of skilled worker, electricians, plumbers, commercial artists, printers, etc., is to be found among the tenants. The average family income in 1939 was £3.50 per week.

At present adult groups predominate at the Centre because there has never been much spare room for youth activities. The matter is being seriously considered, however, and there are now children's groups meeting once each week, and combined weekly meetings for boys and girls between the ages of 14 and 20. There are also handicraft classes for boys and girls and singing nights. Apart from these, life at the Centre is devoted to adults.

Twopence per week has been added to the rent of every house and goes to pay interest and amortization on the mortgage of the Centre. When this plan was first introduced there were objectors, but time has softened the blow and the Centre has become an accepted institution. Its democratic organisation gives everyone on the estate an opportunity of helping to shape their community life. The membership of the affiliated organisations is about 50% of the total number of residents. It is not known how many of the 50% could be considered regular and active members.

Hard and continuous wear has left its mark upon the building but there are no signs to indicate deliberate abuse. Active members co-operate well and are always willing to help with odd jobs. Those who take part in the executive control are keen workers and their composition is constantly changing.

The Centre is strictly non-partisan and non-political. It was found necessary to exclude political and religious bodies from affiliation because in the early days there was a tendency toward political domination by one party. Now that the working machine of the place is strong enough to be unaffected, the restrictions have been withdrawn.

Amateur dramatics with an emphasis on original productions are the most outstanding interest.

#### Administration :

A mortgage of £6,000 for the building of a Community Centre was raised by the First National Housing Trust. The actual cost of the building was £10,000 and the extra £4,000 was made up by the President of the First National Housing Trust personally. Although the Rural District Council was approached when the Community Association was first formed they were unable to help financially.

No aid was obtained from the Government when the Community Centre was built, but an approach was made to the National Fitness Council for a grant when extensions were contemplated. In fact, the Frecheville Community Association was the first to obtain a promise of help from that body. A grant of £2,000 for building a gymnasium and dressing-rooms was requested, but a promise of £1,000 only was forthcoming. After the Board of Education had made revisions in the



drawings, the estimates for extensions came to £3,500, whereupon the National Fitness Council agreed to give another £1,000. Before the money was obtained, the war started and plans had to be abandoned. Because there is no hope of Government grants through the National Fitness Council at present, the Centre is forced to look elsewhere for aid. Again the First National Housing Trust has stepped forward with a plan for making finances available if it is found possible to build during the war or at its conclusion.

Associate membership of the Centre is subject to the approval of the Council and the subscription must not be less than 8/8 per annum. A large number of affiliated bodies, whose minimum fee for affiliation is 2/6d. per annum helps towards financing the Centre. Expenditures are not all covered in these ways, and in the absence of grants for maintenance and current expenses, it is necessary for money-making activities to take precedence in the programme.

The Annual Report for December, 1939 (last pre-war year) shows an expenditure of £1,764. Major items were £619 for wages and salaries, £224 for office expenses, £237 for light, heat, power, water, and rates, £232 on mortgage interest, and £103 on depreciation of furniture and equipment at 10% per annum. The income for the year was £1,806, the major items being £204 from gross profit on canteen account, £666 from subscriptions and affiliation fees, £239 from sports and pastimes, £397 from dances, socials, and cinemas, and £109 from the hire of hall and rooms.

Executive control is in the hands of a Council of 21 members. Twenty are elected from all tenants on the estate, and one is a representative of the First National Housing Trust. One member of each independent affiliated organisation is invited to meetings but may not vote. President and Secretary of the Association are subject to approval of the First National Housing Trust. Representatives of members are elected annually for a period of two years.

The present Secretary of the Association is a full time, paid worker. He was formerly a member of the Association and an enthusiastic organiser of activities. The other permanent staff include a typist, stewardess, buffet attendant, cleaner, and groundsman.

#### Centre Activities :

There are 34 independent organisations affiliated to the Community Association and using its rooms for their meetings and activities. The programme of the Centre itself includes the following :

Nursing Association  
Ladies Choir  
Male Voice Choir  
Dramatic Society  
Tennis Club  
Swimming Club  
Angling Society  
Cricket Club  
Men's Bowls  
Ladies' Bowls  
Gardens Guild  
Ladies' Keep Fit  
Stagecraft Guild  
Original Productions Section

Football Club  
Townswomen's Guild  
Ladies' Handicrafts  
Gloops Club  
Cheer-up Club  
Amateur Orchestra  
Table Tennis Club  
Model Aero Club  
W.E.A.  
Boxing  
Rifle Club  
Cycling Club  
Photography Club

Cubs  
Scouts

Junior Drama Club  
Junior Football Club.

The war, of course, has meant a loss of male members and has affected a number of the organisations, some of which are carrying on with difficulty. The schedule of activities must be kept fluid. Times for meetings and rehearsals have to be altered to suit members who are doing shift work, and to fit in with air raids. A local Citizens' Advice Bureau at the Centre has brought many new people to the building for advice on war-time problems.

Even more interesting than these immediate changes is the fact that the Centre is now being used, not only as a focal point for educational and cultural activities, but frequently as a local Town Hall. Members are looking to the Centre for a lead in public matters. The geographical isolation of Frecheville from the central control of the Rural District Council is responsible for the situation. The interest of the Community Centre in matters of public importance has been shown by their help in arranging for the building of air raid shelters by the Local Authority. At present, a committee composed of members of the Rural District Council and the Community Association are investigating the question of how best to tackle communal feeding at Frecheville.

#### The Centre and the Neighbourhood :

There are 1,600 houses on the estate with a population of about 5,600 persons. The majority of the tenants find their work in the Sheffield area about four to five miles from the estate.

The Centre has been well located on a large site in a commanding position. It is in the heart of the dominant section of the estate and near to shops, public house, estate office, etc. Owing to its position at the head of a broad street which rises sharply from the main road, it cannot be missed by any of the residents in their travels to and from work or the shops and pub.

#### Site Planning :

The building has been well placed at the front of the site where it commands a good view of the estate and the countryside beyond. It has not been crowded too far forward, nor crowded out by the surrounding houses. There is a large pond near the middle of the site, and the new extensions will face on to it. At present the pond is stocked with fish and used by anglers and sailboat enthusiasts. If the additions to the Centre are carried out, site planning will be on a grander scale. The pond will be banked up and cleaned out to make one part suitable for a swimming pool. A playground with apparatus for small children will be on one side of the site, and a row of tennis courts at the rear beyond the pond. Trees, shrubs and gardens will complete the picture.

The main approach to the site is at the front of the Centre, where plots of grass and flowers welcome the members, but there are also broad and strategic stretches of tarmac which anticipate the direction in which they are likely to wander. A car park is provided at one side of the Centre. If the extensive ground work is carried out there will be a major entrance to the grounds at the rear between two tennis courts.

Although the main elevation of the Centre is facing north east, the only rooms which have this aspect are the cloakrooms, lavatories and a store-room. The longest side of the site is to the south-west and the new additions will take full advantage of this sunny aspect.



## Planning of the Building :

In planning, as well as in appearance, the Frecheville Centre is a combination of a traditional, rather formal approach, with an unskilful experiment in a non-traditional style. With its central entrance and foyer, flanking lavatories and offices, one expects to find a better ordered arrangement of doors and circulation. The foyer could be a fine feature and give a clue to the organisation of the building, but it fails to do this.

The Assembly Hall has no separate entrance and cloakrooms, and cannot be easily used without disturbing the regular routine of the Centre. The entrance to the Hall is in an even less important place on plan than the door to the ladies' cloakroom. The approach to such a feature deserves a more convenient and dignified treatment.

The games room and table tennis room are well situated because noise does not penetrate from them to the Assembly Hall or foyer. The common room on the first floor is well placed for a quiet or reading room, but is rather out of the way for rendezvous. The foyer acts as a common room because it is furnished with a few tables and chairs, and a buffet at the rear which connects with the kitchen. In a small Centre, the scheme of having cups of tea, cigarettes and sweets on sale near the main entrance does make an atmosphere of cheery welcome and attracts members to the building. In a larger Centre, such as Frecheville will be if extended, it may prove a serious block in the circulation. A counter for cigarettes and sweets might be retained, but the tables and cups of tea would probably have to go farther into the building.

In the proposed additions to the Centre, much space is devoted to a terrace cafe and sun lounge on the first floor. It remains to be seen if such large expenditure will be justified here. The Assembly Hall will still be left without its own entrance and cloakrooms. The heavy crafts room and gardens guild room will be useful additions, but are awkwardly placed so that they can be reached only by going out of doors.

The first floor of the new wing is to be devoted to a Youth Centre and a gymnasium. The kitchen serves the gymnasium rather than the club room which suggests that the gym is to be used for dancing. This raises the difficult problem of whether the floor boards shall be laid in the proper direction for dancing or for physical training. The extra cost of maintenance when a floor is used for dual purposes is considerable.

In the present Centre circulation is simple and direct, but, as the plan shows, there is no way in which the building can be extended without seriously disturbing the system. Additions will make it necessary to enter one room through another or go outdoors to reach one part of the building from another. Compare the difficulties here with the easy way in which the plan of Impington Village College could be extended.

## The Building and Its Furniture :

The Centre is of brick and timber construction. Walls are finished on the exterior with a smooth surface yellow brick, the plinths and cornices being of a dark brown brick. The roof is of timber hung with green tiles. Windows are the casement type with wood frames. The roof of the two-storey part is flat, and the front wall above the main entrance is embellished with a square "modern" clock. Glass brick frames the entrance.

The interior walls of the Centre have been finished with a plastic paint which can be put on in various colours and patterns. When properly applied by experts it is said to withstand very hard wear. In Frencheville, however, the paint was badly applied and a succession of inevitable kicks and knocks have left the walls in poor condition. In some places the plastic paint is coming away in thick chunks.

The floors in entrance hall and games rooms are linoleum on concrete. The warden's office has a wood block floor and there is a fine maple-boarded floor in the Assembly Hall. On the first floor the floors are of deal boards covered with linoleum.

Colour schemes on the interior are rather cinematic, particularly in the large hall where the walls are painted in stripes graded from deep rose to pale pink with silvery lines between the stripes. Once this type of decoration has lost its freshness it is extremely tawdry. As for its initial appearance, that depends on personal taste. Frecheville claims, however, that the supercinema atmosphere is what members want and enjoy.

The stage is well equipped with lighting in a full colour range and has a gray curtain on which to throw coloured lighting effects. There is a good sound machine for records or use in connection with a 16mm. cinema projector. The proscenium arch is excellent as a frame for dramatic productions, but for musical or choral work it is too low and the sound goes up behind it. A higher proscenium arch which could be lowered by pelmets would be more suitable.

The Assembly Hall is equipped with indirect lighting and coloured lighting. The coloured lights are in coves at the edges of the ceiling and the others in a central group covered with frosted glass and running the length of the room. The indirect and coloured lighting are very popular for dances, but are inadequate for whist drives and socials. Both direct and indirect lighting are really needed.

In addition to its rosy walls, the Assembly Hall has its windows gaily curtained, and the general effect is warm and welcoming. The Hall is equipped with wood chairs which unfortunately do not fold, and therefore are a problem in storing. When the Hall is used for dramatic purposes a fireproof floor covering is put down.

#### SLOUGH SOCIAL CENTRE, SLOUGH, BUCKS

The Slough Social Centre was opened on the Slough Trading Estate in the spring of 1937, and is the largest of its kind in this country. It is interesting because of its origin and backing, and because it is housed in buildings which could be converted to factories if the scheme proved unsuccessful.

In eight years Slough has grown from a town of 30,000 to one of nearly 60,000. With 50% of its population strangers to the community, Slough was faced with a social problem of unusual character. A sharp division was apparent between old inhabitants and new. Amongst workers on the Trading Estate there was a real need for active community life. Seven thousand new working-class houses were built, and the factories on the Estate employ 20,000 workers. Existing organisations could not meet the social, cultural and recreational needs of the new group. In a place like Slough where people both work and live there must be facilities for leisure time adjacent to work and housing. It should be easier to develop community spirit under such circumstances. In peace time there is more leisure in Slough than is customary for workers, because of re-



latively short working hours and the fact that little time is occupied in travelling to and from work.

#### Membership :

Office and factory workers are both among the members of the Social Centre. "Black-coated" or office personnel tend to form a group centred on such activities as badminton, tennis, swimming, and dancing. Factory workers keep to their darts and billiards, but share dining, dancing, and canteen facilities.

There are now about 9,000 members. Early in 1940 there were 4,800 adult members and 1,250 juveniles or under eighteens. At that time 60 to 70% of the members were under 25, indicating that young unmarried workers are most enthusiastic.

The Trading Estate has brought numbers of people to the Slough area from all parts of the country. The two most distinct groups come from Wales and Durham. Although they did not mix well at first, the Centre is large enough for each to find separate interests. By now the two have amalgamated, and typical committees no longer represent any regional group.

The townspeople of Slough, especially the elders, look upon the Trading Estate and the Social Centre as interlopers, but the younger people become members. Considering its short life, the spirit of co-operation among the various groups is high. Standards of behaviour are good and the building has not suffered wanton damage. There is no party political activity but trade unions and employers' associations are permitted to hold meetings there. Propaganda meetings are forbidden.

#### Administration :

The Slough Social Fund, Ltd., which includes manufacturers, traders and private persons, was the initiator of the Centre which is given rent free and subsidized for maintenance. In subscriptions and donations the Social Fund, Ltd. found £34,000 toward the capital cost of the building. The Slough Estates, Ltd. built the Social Centre and contributed £20,000 towards the capital cost. Through the National Fitness Council Grants Committee £15,000 was obtained for a new building for indoor games, a sports pavilion near the Centre, and an athletic ground with running and cycling tracks. The Buckinghamshire County Council Education Committee gave £2,500 towards the reduction of the original capital debt on the buildings, and has built a nursery school at a cost of £4,000 on land provided by the Social Centre. It is entirely responsible for running it. It also contributes £1,500 per annum toward the running expenses of the Juvenile Section. Half of these sums are recoverable by way of grant from the Board of Education to the County Council.

In 1940-41 the Adult Centre paid its own way, making it possible for the Slough Social Fund, Ltd. to make grants of over £2,000 to other bodies. The annual membership fee for employers who wish to belong to the Slough Social Fund, Ltd. is seven shillings per head for each of the average number of employees living within ten miles of Slough. Nearly all firms on the Trading Estate have joined the Fund. In the Senior Section of the Centre Club the normal membership fee is ten shillings per annum, but for employees of members of the Social Fund it is three shillings. In the Youth Centre the subscriptions vary from a halipenny per week for boys and girls between the ages of five and nine to fourpence per week for those from sixteen to eighteen years.

The pre-war running expenses for the year ended 30th April, 1939, give an indication of the scale on which this Centre operates. In that year the Slough Social Fund, Ltd. had an income from subscriptions and donations for maintenance of £4,500 and an excess of income over expenditure of £61. Of this income £3,900 went to the Centre Club and bodies affiliated to the Slough Social Centre in the form of donations and grants. The maintenance accounts for the Social Centre are divided into four sections as follows:

- (a) Senior Section: Expenditure of £12,366, excess of expenditure over income of £98. Major items in the income are £2,300 from the Slough Social Fund, £1,260 from members' subscriptions, and £7,224 from canteen takings.
- (b) Centre Hall: Expenditure of £1,994, excess of expenditure over income of £74. Major items in the income are £560 from the Slough Social Fund, £162 from badminton, £991 from roller skating, and £122 from entertainments and dances.
- (c) Swimming Bath: Expenditure of £1,394, excess of expenditure over income of £57. Major items in the income are £440 from the Slough Social Fund, £486 in admission charges, and £357 from schools.
- (d) The Youth Organisations Committee: (Junior Section.) Expenditure of £2,474 did not exceed income. Major items of the income are £1,500 in grants received, £637 in donations received, £214 in members subscriptions.

The total excess of expenditure over income at 30th April, 1939, was £381.

The Executive Committee of the Social Centre is made up of six members of the Adult Section, five representatives of the Slough Social Fund, and one representative of the County Education Committee. The Chairman is nearly always a member of the Social Fund.

A numerous permanent staff is required, which includes:-

1. The Warden, who acts as Secretary of the Centre Club, Secretary of the Youth Organisations, and is in general charge of all the Centre buildings.
2. Warden's wife, who acts as Secretary of women's activities and manages the domestic affairs of the buildings.
3. Financial Secretary.
4. Social Secretary.
5. Girls' Leader.
6. Boys' Leader.
7. Cashier.
8. Office staff of three women.
9. Canteen staff of three men, five women.



10. Cleaning and maintenance staff, five men, five women.

11. Bath and grounds staff, five men.

#### Centre Activities :

Organisations affiliated to or associated with the Slough Social Fund include over thirty groups such as the Centre Club, the Youth Centre, and other local leagues and clubs.

In the Senior Section of the Centre Club, the social activities include billiards, bridge, darts, folk dancing, modern ballroom dancing, Young Women's Afternoon Club. The recreational activities include Association Football, badminton, boxing, cricket, cycling, fencing, glider skating, ice hockey, Keep Fit Classes for various age groups, motor cycling and light car club, netball, swimming, table tennis and tennis. Educational or cultural activities include a film society, the Centre magazine, orchestra, photographic society, radio entertainments, Theatre Goers' Club, and Workers' Educational Association classes. Miscellaneous activities include a Sick Benefit Club, and the Thrift and Holiday Club.

The Youth Centre comes under the auspices of the Slough Juvenile Organisations Committee. In the Girls' Club the activities include dressmaking, shorthand, cooking, badminton, Keep Fit, drama, socials, joint entertainment committees, handicrafts, singing, indoor games, folk dancing, metal work, library, club service. The chief organisations are the Play Centre, the Brownie Pack, the Girl Guides and the School Girls' Club.

The Boys' Club does woodwork, metal-work, colour-work, physical training, book-keeping, languages, discussion groups, folk and ballroom dancing, drama, orchestra, hobbies, boxing, wrestling, running, swimming, skating, badminton, football, table tennis and weekly club service. The chief boys' organisations are the Boy Scouts and Cubs, St. John's Ambulance Cadets, Boys' Brigade, Schoolboys' Club, Old Boys' Club, and Air Training Corps of 250 boys under 18 years of age.

There are also mixed activities for boys and girls and an annual camp.

The war has altered the aspect of life at the Social Centre radically. During the first winter, half of the floor space was taken by the military, and 800 members of the Forces were using the buildings as temporary members of the Centre Club. It was impossible to have concerts or skating, both gymnasiums were put out of action by billeting, and the attendance of young people decreased. Now, however, the military have vacated and the premises are scheduled for welfare purposes by the Ministry of Labour. Activities have changed considerably in the past year, and the Centre has become the home of many war-time organisations as well as of an increased individual membership.

The normal catering service is so extended that it is viewed as communal feeding by the Ministry of Food. About 15,000 meals are served per week. In the event of local air raids the Centre is scheduled for an emergency feeding station. It has already housed and fed 1,500 evacuees from London during the autumn months of 1940.

#### The Centre and the Neighbourhood :

The size of the neighbourhood unit served by the Social Centre is difficult



to measure because members are drawn from the old town as well as from amongst workers on the Trading Estate. In 1939 one in ten of the population were members, and this proportion still exists. With 9,000 members it would be impossible to expect the community spirit and sense of co-operation which can be found in smaller groups, but war-time conditions have helped to achieve these. Despite the wide range of facilities and equipment in a large Centre, relationships become less personal and sense of ownership and participation less keen.

The Social Centre is situated in a strategic position between the industrial area and the new housing groups, where it is a familiar landmark to workers and their families. The housing estate adjoins the site at one side and the old town of Slough is two miles away.

#### Site Planning :

As the site plan shows, the group of buildings which comprises the Social Centre has not been planned as a whole. The two Assembly Halls and the Senior and Junior Sections are strung out along a main road and directly opposite a group of factories. Such an arrangement was no doubt considered necessary in case the buildings should revert to factories. The nursery school and the swimming bath, which came at a later date, are tucked away behind the other buildings and behind a row of houses.

Site planning was hindered by the fact that the original site was only 4½ acres in extent. Although it was worth £1,000 per acre for industrial purposes, its former owners gave it to the Social Fund for this particular use. Since their beginning, however, the Social Centre has acquired 40 acres of open space which would otherwise have been covered with houses. Playing fields and tennis courts adjoin and help to form a connecting link between the factories and the housing. The four main blocks have been set back from the road far enough to allow for a service road in front. Although it is an excellent scheme to provide an off-the-street car park, it is unfortunate that it should be in front of the community buildings and allowed to detract from their appearance.

The Junior and Senior blocks are situated one on either side of the Assembly Hall, which they can easily reach by covered ways. The Hall acts as a buffer between the two so that their interests do not conflict. Although the nursery school is placed in a reasonably quiet spot and adjacent to the houses, a larger site at the outset would have made a better arrangement possible. The swimming pool, for instance, would have been more convenient if nearer the Centre and the Nursery School could easily have gone farther away.

The roads which surround the site were already in existence, and were not planned to serve the particular needs of the Centre and its adjacent recreational facilities.

#### Planning of the Building :

The chief criticism which springs to mind where the buildings are concerned is that they have a makeshift appearance. Although a large and adaptable volume of space has proved as good in practice as in theory, the shell here was originally designed for factories. A flexible floor plan is achieved but the rooms are tall and gloomy and corridors, although they have been eliminated where possible, are dark and high. However, the possibility of arranging and re-arranging the plan to suit current needs has worked well. The position of the rooms in the Senior Block, for instance, has been changed since the new Hall was built. The members take a keen interest in the changes, and the timber and

wallboard partitions allow alterations which would be impossible under ordinary conditions.

Activities at a Centre of this size are of such a varied nature that it is wise to have rooms which are suitable for many purposes. The furnishing and equipment too should be useful for numerous groups. If a room can be divided into two or even three smaller ones, it will be possible to cater for a wider variety of interests. At the Slough Social Centre folding and sliding partitions are used to achieve this purpose. In the Senior Section the games and store rooms can be thrown into one big room. The main hall may be separated from the lounge by the temporary partition, while the lounge itself may also be divided. In the Junior Section it is possible to throw the girls' and the boys' gyms into one great hall, and several classrooms can be divided into two smaller rooms each. The advantages and disadvantages of temporary partitions of the folding and sliding type are discussed later in this report. At Slough they have proved to be worth while in spite of the chief drawback, which is sound transmission.

A striking feature of the Slough Centre is the fact that the Junior Section is equal in size to the Senior, although it has only one quarter as many members. This is partly explained by the separation of boys' and girls' activities, which means a duplication of gymnasias, club rooms, and lounges. Such duplication is not found for the adults where men and women share lounges, gyms and games rooms. The more active nature of junior activities will also account for their needing more floor space per head.

#### The Building and the Furniture :

The Centre buildings are of steel frame construction with steel roof trusses. The external walls are of brick panel infilling. Timber frame partitions, some of the folding and sliding type, are used for sub-dividing the interior. All floors, except the kitchen, are of wood blocks laid on concrete. The original buildings were heated by tubular electric radiators which run along the skirting in each room. The system has proved expensive, but most convenient. Parts of the buildings have already been fitted with central heating from a hot water circulating system, which should prove more economical when rooms are used as intensively as these.

Colour schemes have been altered from dark and cheerless browns and buffs, to more pleasant blue-greens. The brown woodwork is being "grained". Furniture and furnishing materials are durable, but where design and colour are concerned they do nothing to stimulate the imagination or taste of the members.

#### NORTH KENSINGTON COMMUNITY CENTRE, LONDON

The North Kensington Community Centre was opened in 1936. The site adjoins recently erected working-class housing estates of the block dwelling type built by the Peabody Donation Fund, the Sutton Dwelling Trust, and the Kensington Housing Trust. It was hoped that the Centre would form a focal point for all the social and community activities, and for the Welfare work in connection with these estates.

Kensington is a Borough divided mainly between very poor people at one end and very wealthy residents at the other. So much interest has been taken in the welfare of the poorer people that they have a reputation for being 'bharity



fed". The tenants of the new estates have been moved from overcrowded and bad conditions to their present homes, and it is not surprising that many of them seem to lack initiative or interest in communal activities.

The excellent war time work which the Community Centre was doing was brought to an end when the building was destroyed in an air raid in November, 1940.

#### Membership :

Members of the Centre belonged to the lowest income groups and were mainly unskilled labour. They came from all ages, but the weekly dances and whist drives were patronised by young married couples. Younger people had their own dances and activities.

Older people in the neighbourhood enjoyed the Centre because of the opportunities it offered and because of its pleasant interior. Members did much work in the canteen and at the organisation of social functions. It is true that they seemed to lack a sense of responsibility, but that was only to be expected among people who have the opportunity for the first time of managing their own affairs. Young people caused some damage to the building and grounds, but no more than is usually found in closely crowded urban areas like North Kensington.

#### Administration :

£20,000 was raised from private sources towards building the Centre. Of this the City Parochial Trust gave grants amounting to £1,500. Current expenses were met by voluntary subscriptions; the rent of the Borough Council Welfare Centre, Nursery School, and small flats; the grant of £100 from the Borough Council for library expenses; and the remainder from membership fees, proceeds of dances and socials, canteen profits, etc. The land was rented by the Local Authority to the Kensington Council of Social Service at a rent of 1/- per year. The London County Council and the Board of Education gave two-thirds of the Nursery School expenses. The National Fitness Council had promised £50 towards the flood lighting of the roof for an evening playground.

Expenditure for the year ended 31st December, 1938, was £1,139. Major items were: Warden's salary of £265, wages £378, light and water £114, heating £77, miscellaneous £100. Income for the year was £1,113. Major items were £314 from Warden's Fund; £640 from rent of Warden's flat, Nursery School, Clinic, etc.; and £377 from subscriptions and donations.

Executive control was in the hands of the Community Centre Committee, formerly a sub-committee of the Kensington Council of Social Service. Members were responsible for most of the work in the building through self-appointed committees for the various activities. There was also a general committee on which the members and other bodies using the Centre were represented and which could make recommendations to the executive, Members had no powers of spending money or directing the policy of the Centre.

The Warden lived in a flat above the Assembly Hall. The caretaker had formerly lived on the premises, but had become dictatorial in his attitude towards members. When his place was taken by a new man, the flat was let to people unconnected with the Centre and the caretaker lived nearby. There were numerous voluntary helpers who worked with the members, helping to run Clubs, giving lessons etc.



## Centre Activities :

The Nursery School occupied an important position at the Centre but was run by a separate Committee with its own funds. Children's activities included two Boys' Clubs, Guides, Brownies, Scouts, weekly socials, children's library, dancing classes, violin classes, and dramatic groups. There were weekly dances, and socials for young people, and a junior games room. For adults there was the senior games room, library, dressmaking classes, Keep Fit classes, arts and crafts, woodwork, shoe-repairing classes, gymnastic classes, etc. There were London County Council evening classes, a Poor Man's Lawyer, and a Borough Council Child Welfare Clinic at the Centre.

Membership during the first winter of war increased enormously because of the black-out, desire for companionship, and lack of money for cinemas and other amusements. The Nursery School was evacuated and the entire building used for an elementary school under voluntary teachers in the daytime.

The war-time kitchen was the first to be started in London. A joint committee of local women and experienced women caterers ran it and meals were served at 4d. for children, 6d. or 8d. for adults. Between three and five hundred meals were served daily. There were five whole-time and two part-time paid workers, but the rest of the staff were volunteers.

## The Centre and the Neighbourhood :

In the three block dwelling estates which surrounded the Centre there was a total of just under a thousand flats, meaning a population of between four and five thousand. Membership in the year before the war was three to four hundred, but this does not give an accurate picture of the actual number of persons who benefited from the building. Many came to evening classes, to talks and lectures, to the Welfare Clinic, or to see children at the Nursery School, who were not regular members. They were all permitted to use the canteen and other rooms without joining the Community Association.

The Centre was easily reached from the surrounding houses. Most residents lived within 200 yards.

## Site Planning :

The Centre was on a restricted triangular site which was obtained from the Kensington Borough Council only after long negotiations. The size and shape of the site naturally made planning more difficult. The neighbourhood has not been designed as a unit, but the three housing groups have been considered separately and the Centre sandwiched in amongst them on the last available site.

## Planning of the Building :

If there had been more room on the site, the Centre would undoubtedly have been planned differently, perhaps with a separate wing for Adults and Juveniles. Instead, a formal shape was chosen and the varied functions fitted into it.

After the addition of the Assembly Hall in 1938, the front elevation suffered through having two equally important points of entrance, two important exits. The main entrance also cut the Nursery School in two and led to nothing more important than the door to the Games Room. A stranger found himself lost because there was no office adjacent to the main door and no staircase nearby. The fact

that there was no office on the ground floor was the greatest drawback of the plan in practice. However, the requirements of the London County Council and the Board of Education made it necessary to devote the whole ground floor with its southern aspect to the nursery school.

When the Assembly Hall was added the smaller one became a games room and was probably the most popular spot in the building. It was equipped with large and small billiards tables, table tennis, and darts boards.

The kitchen is well situated and equipped. It has a service door at the rear of the building for bringing in supplies and it serves through a hatch into the refreshment room. The latter lies between the kitchen and the large hall and has a service hatch through to the hall. The arrangement is very convenient in a Centre of this size.

The Assembly Hall has its own entrance, cloaks and lavatories. It is a good shape and has a fine hard wood floor for dancing. The stage is adequate in size and equipment, but the dressing rooms are badly planned. A window, and doors to the lavatory and outside of the building occupy all the wall space in each dressing room and make them difficult to use. The L.C.C. are responsible for the outside doors, of course. There was a roomy chair store under the stage and a large prop-room upstairs over the dressing-room and stage, which has proved to be an excellent arrangement.

The Welfare Centre on the first floor was planned to meet requirements of the Borough Council. Besides the nurses' room, doctor's room, and lavatory for the staff, it included a large and sunny waiting-room for mothers and babies, with facilities for making tea and washing up.

#### The Building and Its Furniture :

The building was of brick construction faced with Sussex stocks and artificial stone dressings. There was a flat roof paved with asphalt and flood-lit for use as a playground. Interior walls were finished in plaster and painted. Floors were of hollow tile, fire-resisting construction with terrazzo finish in the corridors, staircases, and lavatories; wood-block finish in the club rooms, small hall, etc., Japanese oak boarding in the large hall; and linoleum on screed in the nursery school and maternity and child welfare clinic. The joinery was in deal and painted. The stage front in the large hall and a few doors were in oak.

Lavatories adjoining the Assembly Hall were fitted with shower baths so that the Hall could be used for a gymnasium. The building was centrally heated with the exception of the warden's and caretaker's flat. Interior colour schemes were clean and cheerful.

#### CRAIGENTINNY-LOCHEND SOCIAL CENTRE, EDINBURGH

The Craigentenny-Lochend Social Centre was opened in 1938. It differs from other Centres on new housing estates, which have been discussed, in being a typical 17th century country mansion which has been altered for its present use. In Edinburgh there are several Community Centres located in old buildings and one in new quarters. The Craigentenny-Lochend Centre is on a working-class housing estate which is really an overflow from Leith, although within the Edinburgh



boundaries. It has not grown out of a demand among the people for social and cultural facilities. Instead, it was purchased in 1937 by the Edinburgh Corporation who reconstructed the premises. The help of the Edinburgh Juvenile Organisations Committee was enlisted, and it was they who formed the Council which is now responsible for the general organisation. To foster a feeling of community life a membership system was instituted.

#### Membership :

Adult members are mainly workers in the hosiery or rubber factories, printers, shipyard or dock workers, and unemployed. Incomes range from 32/6d. per week (unemployed) to £7. 0. 0. Representatives of the various classes of working people and unemployed mix well. Of the 800 members, approximately 500 are under 18 years of age. About 50% of the total membership is between 5 and 14 years of age, and the next largest age group is the 14 to 21 year olds.

The romantic 17th century mansion in the Scottish baronial style has always been an object of great interest to the local residents. Now that the doors are open, many have formed an affectionate and proprietary feeling about the building. There does not appear to be any deliberate abuse of the Centre or grounds. In fact, it is hoped that if members continue to show their willingness and ability to co-operate in running the Centre, that they will eventually have direct representation on the Council.

#### Administration :

Craigentinny House was purchased for £1,000 by the Edinburgh Corporation who then spent £2,000 in alterations and repairs. The Corporation lets the Council have the building rent free, gives £150 per year toward the caretaker's salary, and pays £25 for using the premises for educational purposes. No Government grants have been received. In fact, the Council were anxious that the venture should be run on a voluntary basis, thinking that this would do more to preserve the independence of residents than if grants were received from public funds. So far this independence has not been realised.

During the year ending in April 1940 the expenditure was £583, the largest items being £210 for wages; £115 for coal, gas and electricity; £65 for cleaning and upkeep; and £85 for depreciation written off. Income for the year was £492; the major sums being £74 in subscriptions; £50 from the Child Welfare Department; £150 from the Edinburgh Corporation, and £97 from membership fees and proceeds of activities. A loss of £90 was sustained.

The Centre is controlled by a Council made up of representatives from various public bodies and organisations and of certain members of the general public who are co-opted occasionally. Detailed work of the Council is carried out by an Executive Committee elected at the annual meeting, and consisting of twelve members of the Council in addition to the officers of the Council. There are also a House Committee and a Finance Committee composed of representatives of the Council. Members have a Committee made up of representatives from each of the sections open to those over fourteen years of age. At present this Committee can only put forward suggestions regarding activities and future developments.

There is an Honorary Warden and an Honorary Organising Secretary at the Centre who are assisted by a number of voluntary workers. The only salaried



workers are the leaders of the Play Centres for toddlers and children. Their salaries are provided by the Education Committee. The caretaker lives on the first floor.

#### Centre Activities :

At the end of its first year the Centre was already overcrowded and working at full capacity. The average nightly attendance, even during the first winter of war, was 180 to 200 persons. The war has, in fact, intensified the use of the Centre.

In the event of air raids the Centre will act as a Casualty Information Bureau for the district. Arrangements have also been made in co-operation with the Corporation, to serve communal meals whenever the necessity arises or when there is a local demand.

The organisation is divided into the following sections:

Toddlers' Play Centre	Boys' Club
Play Centre for Boys and Girls	Women's Club
Brownies and Girl Guides	Men's Club
Cubs, Boys Scouts, Sea Scouts	Citizen's Advice Bureau
Girls' Club	Girls' Guildry

#### The Centre and the Neighbourhood :

There are about 22,000 people in the neighbourhood served by the Social Centre, but so far only 800, or less than 4%, are members. The scheme has not been operating long enough to judge whether it will be called upon to serve more people, but the existing premises will not be suitable to meet an increased demand.

The Building is surrounded by new housing, railroad yards, industrial areas, and works. About a mile to the north-east lie the Leith Docks where many local residents are employed. The heart of Edinburgh is only a mile away. The centre is adjacent to two schools, which always form a nucleus of community life, and also in the midst of a housing area. In the region which it is said to serve, none of the houses is more than a mile distant.

#### Site Planning :

The grounds of Craigentinny House have been left nearly as they were. Gardens at the side and rear remain carefully tended. In front, some changes have been made. Before the old stables, now used for a gymnasium, there was to have been an outdoor play-space paved with tarmac, but the scheme has been postponed. A tall fence separates this part from the remainder of the front yard and the gate is kept locked. Separate entrances for boys and girls are thus provided.

Behind the house, a large timber hut built by the Men's Club, runs at right angles to the building. It is at the extreme edge of the site to leave room for tennis courts which the Centre hopes to have some day.

It is a pity that when the House was being remodelled the question of a main entrance was not given more thought. At present there are four doors at the front of the building, one to the gymnasium wing, one to the office, one to the Unemployed Men's Club, and another to the staircase which leads to the three

floors above. The fourth is the nearest approach to a main entrance but is mainly used for access to the Girls' Club on the third floor. At the rear of the Centre is a Boys' Club entrance and at first level an entrance to the large hall, approached by an external flight of stairs. Although all parts of the building can be easily reached by their individual doors or stairs, more emphasis might have been given to the door which already exists at the staircase wall by the left side of the Centre. Had this been made more important and the office been placed next to it, the functions of the building would have been more unified.

The site cannot be extended because it is bounded on two sides by housing, on the third by factory buildings, and on the fourth by a street. It is ample, however, for the present building and for any recreational facilities which might be laid out in connection with it. If expansion is necessary, it would undoubtedly be wise to retain this building for adults and to build a new Youth Centre nearby. Although children are attracted by the romantic character of the old house, their activities could be carried on more suitably in a modern building especially designed for them.

#### Planning of the Building :

Turning a large private house into a social centre is a difficult job, but a number of good things have been achieved at Craigentimny House. The second and third floors have been made into a Boys' Club and a Girls' Club, each with its separate entrance and staircase. Rooms on the first floor have been reserved for adults and can be reached by their own outside entrance. Folding and sliding partitions made it possible to use two rooms as a big hall for dances and whist drives.

Although separate accommodation for different age groups has been provided, the space left for adults is rather meagre. The Men's Hut in the back garden atones for this in some measure, but does not provide anything in the way of smaller committee and meeting rooms, or a proper common room. Clever use has been made of the small turrets and towers at the corners of the House. They have been turned into lavatories and cloakrooms wherever possible. The old stables make a small but well equipped gymnasium which is intensively used. Showers and dressing-rooms are in the old coach-house.

Craigentimny House is by no means an ideal building for a Social Centre, but the people who use it enjoy its atmosphere and character. The rooms are not the right size and shape for most of the activities, and it is certainly more suitable for an adult than for a youth Centre. A four-storey building creates problems of circulation, and the transmission of noise through the floors to the different sections must be expected.

#### The Building and its Furniture :

The Centre is of stone and timber construction. Walls are of stone, finished on the interior in plaster. The roof is of timber and hung with slates. Floors are of deal boards on joists on the upper floors, and of stone on the ground floor.

The Men's Hut is of timber frame construction and is 60' x 20'. It was erected by the voluntary labour of the men themselves from sections which were furnished by contract. The internal panelling and decorations were also done by the members. The Hut has a hardwood floor and could be used for dances.



The House and the Hut are both centrally heated from the same coke fired boiler.

The interior of the Men's Hut is bright and cheerful, and furniture is mainly card-tables and deck-chairs from a ship. Decorations and furniture in the house were dull and uninteresting, but members of the Men's Club have re-painted the Boys' Club in bright colours which cheers it up considerably.

The girls have also re-painted their own Club, and made new curtains and chair covers. They have chosen their own materials and colours and, for the most part, have chosen well.

#### IMPINGTON VILLAGE COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Impington Village College is one of a group of four built by the Cambridgeshire County Council in the last ten years. It was opened in the autumn of 1939. The motive behind the Village College movement is to provide a centre for adult community life as well as a Senior School for boys and girls.

The social, economic, and cultural life of rural areas has become increasingly dependent on urban centres in the last one hundred years. Under the present economic system it is impossible for sparsely populated villages to support adequate social services and amenities and to obtain really good Technical and Secondary Schools. Only by grouping such services together at the heart of a rural region can they be made economically possible. There are two kinds of rural region, first, the small country town of several thousand persons with its adjacent villages, and, second, the group of villages around a large central village.

A collective Senior School in the heart of a group of villages is not in itself a new conception. The revolutionary character of the Village Colleges lies in their being something more than merely schools of a conventional type. They start with the purpose of being a Community Centre in the real sense of the word and of serving the population of their district at all stages in life, rather than at school age only. In fact, the Village Colleges are really Community Centres which house a Senior School and have special accommodation for adult use only. Modern transport makes it possible to knit the large rural district into a social unit. Mr. Henry Morris, Education Secretary for Cambridgeshire, is largely responsible for the successful development of the Village College system in this county.

#### Membership :

The Impington Village College serves ten villages, four to the east and four to the west of Histon and Impington. The majority of adults who attend are engaged in agriculture or horticulture as farm workers, small holders, or fruit growers. Many of those living in Histon and Impington work at Messrs. Chivers' jam factory. Among the other occupations represented are railway workers, clerks, builders, carpenters, engineers, mechanics, business people, and shop assistants.

Adolescents (aged 14-20) predominate at the formal evening classes, although all ages from 14 to 70 are well represented. The number of persons using the College is increasing in spite of the war with its blackout and transport



difficulties. (The College runs buses three nights per week to pick up people from all over the district.) About 300 soldiers use the building regularly and make up to some extent for the loss of young men in the neighbourhood. Being temporary residents in the district, however, they are more interested in recreational activities than in the educational work of the College. Between 1,200 and 1,400 persons attend the College each week for social or educational activities.

Reactions are, on the whole, favourable. Among those who use it regularly, there is great enthusiasm not only for the work and purpose of the College, but for the building itself. Older people of the neighbourhood are, of course, inclined to be critical of its non-traditional style.

The district has been considerably affected by evacuation. The child population shows a large increase. In the Senior School there are now 370 on the roll although the normal accommodation is for 280.

Although it has been opened for nearly two years the Village College is standing up well to hard and intensive use. Finishes in passageways and the entrance hall are designed to resist hard wear. Classrooms with their dados of glazed tiles show little signs of damage, and even the plaster walls of rooms in the adult wing have not been damaged.

#### Administration :

The Cambridgeshire County Council and the Board of Education each gave a grant of £10,000 towards the cost of the building and the lay-out of the grounds. From non-official and voluntary sources the following funds were received:

A group of subscribers	...	£1,200
Sir Halley Stewart Trust	...	£1,000
Carnegie Trust	...	£ 800
Messrs. Chivers	...	£8,000

The total cost of the College, excluding the layout of the grounds, was £26,656. The site of 12 acres was given by the Chivers family.

Costs of heating, lighting, and cleaning are borne by the Cambridgeshire Education Committee. The Recreation Club pays £50 per annum for using a room and the Students Council pays £3. 3. Od. per annum for use of the canteen. Other organisations have free use of the adult wing but pay for using the Assembly Hall.

Executive control of the College is in the hands of the Education Committee and of the Governing Body. This last is composed of representatives from every village in the district, chosen by the Education Committee, and also one representative from every Parish Council. The Students' Council has considerable part in running the daily life of the College. It is made up of representatives from every class and activity in the College, and meets monthly. The Chairman is elected from among the members and is automatically on the Governing Body. All age groups are represented on the Student Council which is a rich training ground in self-government for the young people. It has various sub-committees to deal with activities. The money it raises (from the Canteen, for example) goes into its own funds and cannot be touched by anyone but the Council. The funds are used for providing items of equipment, transport, etc.

Apart from the Warden, an Adult Organiser, and the caretaker there is no full-time paid staff for evening work. Clubs are run entirely by volunteers who come to the College to help with some particular activity. They often get elected to the Students' Council and form a deeper interest in the whole organisation. There are 70 voluntary women helpers who provide meals in the canteen (7 each night).

#### Village College Activities :

In addition to the normal programme of the Senior School for boys and girls there are evening classes which include the following : (Winter Session 1940-41)

Public Speaking	Farm Tractors
Fitness for Service	Gardening
Keep-Fit for Girls and Women	Music - Listeners
Dressmaking	Dramatic Society
Needlework	Drama (Junior)
Woodwork	Music Makers' Class
Metal Work	Ourselves and Our World
Art and Craft	This Century in England
Cookery	French
Wartime Cookery	German
Household Revovations	Business Training
Agricultural Society	Folk Dancing
Young Farmers Club	Boxing
Animal Husbandry	

Fees for adults are 2/6d. for one course, 4/- for two or more courses. For young people under 18 the fees are 2/6d. for any number of courses.

A Youth Club has been organised with separate Girls' and Boys' Clubs. Since all other groups are mixed, the young people preferred to have their separate clubs, although they do join together for some activities. The classrooms are used for their meetings.

The Common Room is for the use of people who come for evening classes or to play games. The Library is open to everyone, and the Committee Room is available to all bodies which apply for its use; the Games Room is open to all who pay an annual subscription of 4/- to the Games Institute.

#### The College and the District :

The average radius of the area served by the College is five miles, although the majority of people come from within a radius of two miles. In fact, those coming from the immediate vicinity outnumber those from outlying districts by about two to one. The average weekly attendance during the winter for formal evening classes is 300. The population of the district served by the Village College is approximately 7,500.

#### Site Planning :

The site comprises 12 acres and was formerly part of Impington Park. There are many fine trees which have been carefully preserved. The building is set well back from the road with a pleasant stretch of green open space forming a dignified and welcoming approach. Trees flank the entrance to the Assembly Hall which is the commanding feature of the main elevation.



The wing containing classrooms is situated at the rear of the building away from the road. In this position it avoids the noise and distraction of traffic and has a fine view over the open fields. The adult or community wing, on the other hand, is at the front of the building and easily reached from the road and car park. The same is true of the Assembly Hall.

Although the main entrance to the Village College and the Assembly Hall is easily reached from the road, there is no distinct separation of pedestrians from motor cars. As the school children will arrive by bus, and many of the adults by motor car or bus, this is an important oversight. The remainder of the site is well provided with footpaths.

In placing the building on the site the orientation has been carefully considered. The classroom wing faces south-east so that a maximum of morning sunlight can be let into the rooms. One long elevation of the adult wing faces north-west and the other south-east. The side facing north-west is given extra light by a series of bow windows designed to catch all available sunshine. As these rooms are used mainly in the evenings, the question of sunlight is not of such great importance as it is in other parts of the building.

The site planning should lend itself easily to future rearrangements because the building has not been crowded into a corner and because its open and flexible nature has not made a formal site plan necessary. The present site is ample for any extensions which might be made to the building and outdoor recreational facilities, and the site itself can be extended. At present it is all under cultivation and the village tennis courts and recreation grounds are used. Eventually it is planned to have tennis courts, bowling greens, and playing fields.

#### Planning of the College :

The most excellent thing about the College is that the three major parts of the building have been very skilfully planned in their relation to one another. The classroom wing, the adult wing, and the Assembly Hall are situated so that their functions can be fulfilled quite independently. On the other hand, they are knit together into a unified whole.

However, it is unfortunate that the main entrance to the College should have been so placed that it seems less important than the entrance to the Assembly Hall. The Hall has been given undue emphasis on plan, and the classroom and adult wings seem ancillary rather than vice versa. In view of the fact that no separate cloak-rooms and lavatories were provided for the Hall and no enclosed entrance lobby, this situation is accentuated. To avoid draughts in the Hall it has been necessary to build a plywood screen at the back of the room to act as a small exit passage. When the Hall is used for large functions by the general public, it is necessary to use the College entrance and cloakrooms, and to enter the Hall through the small connecting door to the promenade.

There is a good stage in connection with the Assembly Hall, and the equipment in the form of lighting, switchgear, and curtains has all been provided by the adult groups who use it. Dressing-rooms are at the rear of the stage, but up a half flight of stairs. No chair store has been provided for the Hall, and the space under the stage is not utilised for any form of storage. This means that the chairs must be stacked in the back when the room is used for a gymnasium, which happens daily.

The promenade serves a useful purpose in sorting out the circulation of the building and acts as the very core of the plan. There is a strong contrast between the feeling of openness in the two wings and the enclosed atmosphere here. The original plans proposed to have the end wall completely of glass but this feature had to be abandoned. Blackout screens over windows and doors cut out much of the available light and spoil the appearance of the promenade at present. It is used for a dining-room and is served directly from the canteen. As there is no storage space for the tables and forms they are stacked against the walls when not being used. Although the Hall is used for physical training, the school programme is now so full that the promenade has proved very useful as an extra gymnasium for the Senior School.

The plan of the College is simple in spite of the excellent way in which it serves its dual or triple functions. Movement from one part of the building to another is made direct and extremely pleasant by means of the central promenade which joins classrooms to the Assembly Hall and to the adult wing. The use of covered but unscreened ways for reaching the classrooms is questionable in this climate. Loss of heat in the classroom block which is open on two sides is high. In winter months, particularly with the blackout, this open means of access proved unsatisfactory in the adult wing. The internal doors between rooms became passageways and it was necessary to turn the covered way into an enclosed corridor with a narrow strip of windows which could be easily blacked out.

There is at present no special provision in the form of a Common Room and Games Room for the 14 to 20 age group. This is to be provided. Plans have been drawn up for the provision of a Youth Recreational Wing consisting of a Common Room, with store and canteen, a Games Room for Girls and a Games Room for Boys. The approximate cost is £4,000 towards which the Sir Halley Stewart Trust have contributed £850.

Storage space is another vital need at the College. If the promenade continues to be used as the dining-hall it needs a chair and table store, and the Assembly Hall needs a chair store. The Hall is used now as a gymnasium although the floor is of deal boards and laid the long way of the room. A Gymnasium is among the hoped-for extensions to the College. Some of these necessary items were omitted from the original plan owing to lack of funds.

Fortunately, the nature of the plan is such that additions can be made without upsetting the fundamental circulation. A whole new wing could be added, or the two long wings which already exist could be easily extended. Flexibility in a building of this kind so that it can be easily enlarged or altered is an extremely important consideration.

As for the possibility of using rooms for several different purposes, the College was designed with that very end in view. Although it is used in the daytime as a rural Senior School, it can be easily used by adults in the evenings for both social and educational pursuits. The community wing is reserved for adults alone, but the classrooms are for persons of all ages. The architects realised that it was important to give the whole College and the classrooms in particular an atmosphere that represented a friendly, community spirit rather than the traditional schoolroom outlook. Because the adults who use the classrooms are using them for educational purposes the question of their furnishings and equipment being unsuitable does not arise. In any case, they are furnished with tables, chairs, and desks of extremely good design, and the colour schemes and wall finishes are cheerful and bright.



In the adult wing, the Common Room is one of the most pleasant to be found in any Club or Community Centre. It is nearest to the main entrance and is served from the kitchen directly. Games and card rooms adjoin the Common Room, while the Library, Lecture Hall, and Committee Room are at the end of the wing where they are in a quieter position. The Library is also used by the Senior School, and it is doubtful if it is well situated from their viewpoint.

#### The Building and Its Furniture :

The brick walls of the Village College are load bearing. Steel is used to some extent for roofing and in the construction of the Assembly Hall. There are 14" external walls faced on the outside with a rough textured yellow brick. A dark brown brick is used for the plinths, the chimney stacks, and the piers carrying the steel girders of the Assembly Hall; 14" structural walls divide the classrooms and carry the steel joists which support the roof.

On the internal walls plaster has been eliminated in the passageways and the promenade partly to cut down noise and partly to avoid danger of cracked and damaged surfaces. Instead of plaster, light greysand lime bricks have been used and pointed with yellow cement, which makes a cheerful wall surface. In the science laboratory the same sand lime bricks have been used, but in the classrooms the walls are plastered above a dado of glazed tiles (about 3'6" high). Boards of soft composition material which does not show marks are affixed to the walls of the rooms for posting notices, putting up maps and drawings, and exhibiting students' work.

In the adult wing, the walls of the Lecture Hall and Common Room are finished in plywood panelling. It has worn very well and shows little dirt although the surface has been left unpainted. In the table tennis, billiards, and card-room the plaster walls seem to have received good treatment and are little damaged. The white wall of the table tennis room has had to be cleaned, and is unsuitable in any case for this game because the ball cannot be seen against it.

Floors in the classrooms and in the promenade are covered with compressed wood composition blocks. Underfloor heating is used in the classrooms, adult wing, and in the two-storey block. To produce a temperature of 65o in the room the floor does not get hotter than 72o. This form of heating not only saves much valuable wall space, but is much cleaner than ordinary radiators. Nearly all the ceilings are covered with fibre board panels which are acoustically good.

In the classrooms the sliding windows which face south-east allow a 50% opening. All window frames are steel. Furniture throughout the College is remarkable for its simplicity of line and its cheerful use of colour. Light woods are used and upholstery is in warm rich shades, but durable materials. Blackout curtains and screens, and shatterproof material on the windows detract from the appearance of the College, but it remains a refreshing and stimulating building.

#### TOWNHILL COMMUNITY CENTRE, SWANSEA

The original plans for the Townhill Centre were prepared in June, 1936. The accommodation then proposed was for adults only and the estimates came to £8,000. The Ministry of Health advised the Borough to include a juvenile section, which brought the estimates to £15,000. A tender for £15,193 was accepted and money borrowed with the sanction of the Ministry of Health. A grant of £700 for the adult section was received from the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust.

## The Centre and the Neighbourhood :

The future members of the Centre will undoubtedly come mainly from the homes built by the Housing Committee although the owners of privately built houses will be free to join and it is hoped that they will. The working-class tenants are mainly dock workers who travel to and from the waterfront each day, a distance of several miles. The local people are reported to be keen on amateur dramatics and to be very musical. An opportunity for developing these activities at the Centre is expected to be a great attraction.

The Centre will be run jointly by the Education Committee who will give grants in connection with the juvenile section, and by the Housing Committee who will be responsible for the adult section. It is hoped that the adult section will be managed by a members' committee without any interference from the Local Authority. The Town Clerk has drawn up an agreement, the terms of which must be respected by the Members' Committee.

There will be a warden in control of the juvenile section. He will also act as an advisor to the adults if requested to do so by their Committee.

Before the Centre was completed, it was scheduled as an Emergency Hospital. The Juvenile Wing has since been occupied as a temporary school.

### Situation :

The Centre is extremely well situated in the midst of the Townhill Housing Estate, 500 feet above sea level, and the major part of Swansea. The estate has been built since the last war and now includes 5,000 houses, of which 3,700 were built by the Housing Committee and the remainder by private enterprise. It has been laid out according to site plans and recommendations made by Sir Raymond Unwin twenty years ago. These original plans wisely reserved a number of sites in the heart of the estate for community buildings. Already three sites have been taken by religious bodies, a fourth by a junior school, and the Community Centre occupies a fifth.

The Centre faces south over a large oval plot of open space which serves as a traffic roundabout. Beyond the roundabout the ground falls away rapidly to the town and the harbour so that the Community building enjoys a splendid view. The site adjoins that of the junior school at one side, and the eight-acre playing-field for boys and girls at the rear. Other playing fields, public gardens, a school, and a cinema are nearby.

Its location alone should prove a very strong factor in making the Townhill Centre successful. Very few Centres enjoy the advantages with which it will start its career, - a new building and an admirable situation on a reserved plot of ground in the heart of a planned community.

### Planning of the Building :

The Community Centre is an ambitious and comprehensive scheme. Included in one building are a Dental Clinic, a Library, an Assembly Hall, a Gymnasium, an adult centre and a youth centre. It is unusual and excellent to find all these community services grouped together in one unit.

The Library and the Dental Clinic are so planned that they can function independently of the other parts of the Centre, but can be used for other activities as well. The Clinic is fully equipped and has a waiting-room. The



Branch Library has a pleasant ground floor reading-room and a small lending department. Each has its own entrance.

The Assembly Hall is a good shape and seats 350 people. The stage is small for dramatics. The dressing-rooms open directly on to the stage or on to a passage at the rear of the stage. As this passage is also one of the major means of circulation in the building, the result may be unsatisfactory when dramatic performances are under way, even though the rear part of the building can be cut off from the remainder if required. The Hall is situated in the very heart of the Centre so that its windows open on to a small interior courtyard. The disadvantages of its position are bad daytime lighting, inadequate backstage room, and the easy transmission of noise from this room to other parts of the building and vice versa. There is storage space for chairs and properties under the stage.

The adult section of the Centre is at the front of the building where it enjoys the southern aspect and a fine view. The rooms are light, airy and spacious. There is a variety of room sizes so that various activities can be accommodated. There are rooms for adults on both the ground and first floors. The Canteen is on the first floor with a service lift connecting it to the end of the Hall. There is a service stair from the ground floor for the use of the adult and juvenile Canteens. A passageway between the two makes it possible for them to supplement each other in rush hours.

The accommodation in the juvenile wing may prove to be rather limited, judging from experience at other Centres. There are a number of small rooms and not so much variety in size as in the adult section. The juveniles have been located at the rear of the Centre where they have easy access to the playing fields.

Apart from the storage space under the stage there are no other specially planned storage rooms. There are, however, a number of so-called spare or extra rooms, which will undoubtedly be used for storage.

#### The Building and Its Furniture :

The Centre is built of a local red brick, with cavity walls because of the exposed site. The roof is of timber covered with felt and tiles. Window frames are of steel. The interior walls are finished in plaster and distempered a light buff. At a later date they will be painted, when the plaster has had ample time to dry. There are wood block floors in all rooms and hardwood floors in the Gymnasium and Hall. The floors in passageways are finished with terazzo and those in lavatories and canteens with tiles.

The building is centrally-heated throughout.

#### WERRINGTON AND DISTRICT VILLAGE HALL, STAFFORDSHIRE

In December, 1931 a Public Meeting was held in Werrington to discuss the need for an adequate centre where residents could meet for social and educational purposes. It was unanimously decided to start a building fund for a Village Hall, and a local Committee was formed consisting of elected representatives from all the village organisations (Chapel, Church, Football Club, Women's Institute, District Nursing Association, Parish Council) and a few co-opted members. The

Committee raised funds by holding whist drives, socials, bazaars, etc. In September, 1937 the Hall was opened.

#### Administration :

The Village Hall Committee raised £817 by its own efforts. Out of these funds a site of 550 square yards was purchased for £75. The National Council of Social Service approved a grant of £230 towards the building and a loan of £350 free of interest and repayable in five years. The total cost of the Hall, including the land, building, furniture, architect's fees, and value of gifts and labour was £1397. Funds raised by letting the Hall and by annual bazaars have enabled the Committee to be self supporting and to make annual payments on their loan from the National Council of Social Service.

The Hall is run by a Committee consisting of two representatives of the Parish Council, two School Managers, two representatives of the local Home Office Approved School, one from the District Nursing Association, one from the Boy Scouts, two from the Women's Institute, two from the Church of England, and two from the Chapel. Another ten members are elected at the Annual Public Meeting, and another ten are coopted by the above twenty-six members. Those members who represent organisations are rechosen annually.

#### Village Hall Activities :

The Hall is used by all the local organisations represented on the Committee, and the Home Guard, Auxiliary Fire Service, etc. The Parish Council hold their meetings at the Hall. There are dances each week, frequent whist drives, and annual bazaars. Badminton is a popular game, and the Village team and the Women's Institute team use the building regularly.

#### The Village Hall and the Neighbourhood :

Werrington lies four miles to the east of Hanley in a semi-rural district. Although not sufficiently far from the potteries to be an agricultural community, it is still isolated enough to benefit by such a building as the Village Hall and by all the traditional activities which support the Hall. The majority of the population of about 2000 persons are working class.

#### Site Planning :

The site is on the main road through the village and in the centre of the district served. It is narrow and deep. Although room for extension has been left at the rear of the site, there is a small front garden planted with shrubs and evergreens which makes a pleasant approach to the Hall.

#### Planning of the Hall :

The building consists of only the one large room with entrance lobby at one end, flanked by lavatories and cloakrooms, and with a semi-permanent stage at the other with a kitchen and committee room behind. The simple, straightforward plan works well and is economical. The kitchen is well equipped with sink, drain-boards, counters, ample shelves, cupboards, a gas cooker, and an ascot hot-water heater. The committee room is large enough for small meetings and Women's Institute groups. Both the kitchen and committee room are used as dressing rooms in connection with the stage. There is outside access to both. The stage is constructed so that the front half of the platform can



slide back on top of the rear half and thus increase floor space in the Hall for dances and badminton. The pelmets remain fixed in position for the full stage but do not inconvenience the badminton players or spoil the appearance of the room. Above the stage there is a storage loft reached through a trap door. There is a small gallery above the entrance hall and cloakrooms, which is reached by a staircase from the hall. The gallery is used for extra seating accommodation or for projecting films.

#### The Hall and Its Furniture :

The building is mainly of brick and timber construction, steel being used in the truss which supports the roof. External walls are finished in a dull red brick and the roof is covered with grey slates. Window frames are of timber, and the internal window cills are tiled.

The interior finish of the Hall is not only very pleasant, but extremely practicable. Internal walls are of common brick throughout, but they have been painted in cheerful colours so they cannot be said to detract from the general appearance in any way. In the main hall, kitchen, lavatories, and entrance passage the walls are of light green and the doors and trim are painted a soft, warm grey. In the committee room the walls are pale yellow.

The main hall has a floor of close boarding. This economical solution to the problem has been found satisfactory for dancing and badminton up to the present, but the boards are already beginning to show wear and to splinter. The board floor of the committee room is covered with linoleum. Kitchen and lavatory floors are tiled.

Wooden chairs are used in the Hall. The folding card tables have been made by the village men. The Women's Institute made the stage curtains. A piano and a radiogram are among the equipment of the Hall.

## CONCLUSIONS

### The Community Association :

Behind the Community Centre which is used to the fullest advantage in a healthy and democratic fashion is an association composed of members of the neighbourhood. It is usually called a Residents' or Community Association. The majority of Centres have grown from a demand on the part of local residents for facilities, while a few have come into being as the result of outside activity. Ideally, an Association is started by the members of the Community which it serves. It is their own idea, or at least, the conception of someone among them.

In most cases there must be some direction from outside which will help to establish a Community Association and will lead to the need for a building. The external stimulus can be helpful even if it merely means acquainting local residents with what has been done in other communities and what the possibilities are of obtaining financial aid. The Swaine House and District Association in Bradford may be cited as a case in which the original spark of enthusiasm was planted by a local town councillor. It can be done as it was here without pushing the people too far and spoiling their own natural enthusiasm.

The Watling Community Centre is a good example of a building gained through the efforts of a vigorous Residents' Association. If it fails to fulfil its early promise, the failure can be attributed to other important factors discussed in the report on that Centre. Certainly it would not have attained its present high degree of success had it not been the home of a well-established Community Association.

The Filwood Park Social Centre in Bristol was built by the Local Authority before the residents had realised the need for an effective Community Association to run it. Not only had there been no eagerness displayed by the tenants of the housing estate, but no efforts were made by the authorities to arouse interest in a community building. The inevitable result was that the Centre, once built, did not immediately become a busy focus for community life. Now, after two years as a Centre, the struggle to build up a community life is still in an immature stage.

The question of which should come first, the Community Centre or the Association, is difficult to settle in a final way. Where the Association comes first it is hard to keep enthusiasm alive during the long period of raising money for a building and of getting it built. Temporary premises become more irksome as the Association tries to grow, and the difficulties to be surmounted dampen the spirits of the young Association. Often the lack of any headquarters at all will make it impossible to start an Association. On the other hand, a Community Centre with no Association behind it will have no integrating force and may function merely as a public hall.

A possible solution to the problem would be to provide a structural nucleus on a good site so that there will be a proper home in which to start a young Association. This first unit could be a part of the complete Centre, yet sufficiently selfcontained so that it could be used for a year or two while the Association grows. Then, as the need arises and as funds are raised, the Centre could be built stage by stage. Architecturally, this should present no



insurmountable problems if an ample site is chosen at the outset, and if the plan of the whole building has been well thought out and continually considered as new parts are added.

In the case of Village Halls it can be observed that those which are used to the best advantage have usually been produced by the efforts of an enthusiastic Village Hall Committee. When the Hall has been presented as a gift by some wealthy friend, it often is a less successful and integral part of the community life.

In cases where a Local Authority recognises the need for a Community Centre in a given district and has every intention of eventually building one, there is room for considerable "ground work". In the case of the new South Reading Community Centre the future warden was installed with his family in a nearby council house months before the building was completed. He was able to study the character of the neighbourhood, local customs and habits, and to make acquaintances. Preliminary work on the part of the Local Authority might go even farther than appointing a secretary or warden before the building is completed. An investigation of local conditions could be made, to discover if the residents display any interest in community activities and if they show an aptitude for them. If a fully-equipped Centre is built in an unprepared community which has not displayed an active desire for such a building, it may turn out to be a white elephant. From the architect's viewpoint, too, it will be more satisfactory to build for Associations who have had time to develop particular interests and who will have an idea of what accommodation they need.

#### The Community Centre and the Neighbourhood Unit :

Many Community Centres which would be otherwise successful suffer because of their location in relation to the neighbourhood they serve. It is of paramount importance that they be conveniently situated. Before this can be assured, however, the population and the extent of the neighbourhood must be known. This raises the difficult point of how many families a Community Centre should serve.

The question cannot be answered by a hard-and-fast rule which says that to so many thousand families there shall be one Community Centre. The rule would be unsatisfactory at once if applied to different densities of population, that is, to urban, sub-urban, and rural populations. While a Centre might satisfactorily serve several hundred families on a cottage housing estate at 12 families to the acre, the same facilities would have to be duplicated many times at close intervals if they were to be used by only the same number of persons in a large town. A standard arrangement would prove impracticable in a sparsely-populated rural area where the great distances to be travelled would make the constant use of a Centre by the given number of families impossible.

The National Council of Social Service believes that, living at a density of 12 families to the acre, 2,000 families is the number which can be usefully served by a Community Centre and recommend that figure as a guide in providing such buildings, particularly on housing estates. Community Centres have not been functioning long enough for accurate studies to have been made which would prove the value of this figure. Existing Centres vary in the size of area which they are expected to serve and in the percentage of population which they can claim as members.

In addition to the differences in area and population which Community Centres serve, there is also considerable variation in their size. Some have only a bare minimum of Hall and two or three all-purpose rooms. Others have a large number of rooms of various sizes and shapes as well as their Assembly Hall and Gymnasium. Although the very large and expensively equipped Community Centre is not to be recommended to the exclusion of other smaller Centres, there is probably room for both types in a well-co-ordinated plan for providing such facilities.

The Slough Social Centre is an example of a large organisation which can offer its members a wide choice of activities and many unusual advantages such as a swimming-bath, roller-skating rink, and fine playing fields. At the same time, because of its very extensive buildings and the thousands of persons using them, members miss the intimate contacts and the more personal identification with the whole group which are to be found at smaller Community Centres.

Many of the extra facilities which the very large Centre can offer are already to be found in urban areas. Where they are not, or where they need to be renewed or duplicated, the scheme of grouping them together in a large community building is excellent, particularly if this building is supported by a number of subsidiary Community Centres in other parts of the neighbourhood. In the smaller Centres it would not be necessary to duplicate the more expensive items, such as Assembly Halls, swimming-baths, and extensive playing fields. These could be jointly used at the main Centre.

In Glasgow plans have been prepared by the Housing Department for a very large Community Centre which will include an Assembly Hall for 1,006 persons, a library with adult and juvenile reading-rooms, a swimming bath, and a Youth Welfare Centre (which includes club rooms for boys and girls, a Mothers' Welfare Clinic, and a Hall for 250 persons). Obviously such items as the swimming-bath and the large hall could not and need not be duplicated at frequent intervals. It is open to question whether such a large building will promote the neighbourly atmosphere essential to a Community Centre.

The question to be decided then is not merely how many families should be allotted to one Community Centre, but what constitutes the neighbourhood unit of which the Centre should be a part. The conception varies, but its chief characteristics remain constant. Among the important things which make up a neighbourhood are, first of all, the houses in which people live, and secondly, the various community buildings which they use. These latter consist of shops, cinemas, schools, churches, public houses, etc., which are to be found in a large or small degree at strategic points in any residential area. Such public and commercial buildings tend to group themselves together into some form of shopping or civic centre and to be patronised by the surrounding population. The radius from which people will come to them is decided by the density at which they are housed.

Community Centres must become a part of this natural pattern, and the location and nature of each new one will be an individual problem which must be studied in relation to local conditions. Any tendency toward standardisation of pattern in all parts of the country and for all types of population should be avoided.

Once the particular neighbourhood has been chosen and studied, there are some conditions which can be applied to the location of all Community Centres. The majority have so far been built on new housing estates. Many have been badly



situated and the development of community life has suffered as a result. The Watling Community Centre is an outstanding example of such faulty location. Not only was it placed on a part of the housing estate where the Residents' Association was not most active, but it was unrelated to any civic or shopping centre, or to the central open space at the heart of the estate.

It is extremely important that new housing estates should be planned with an idea of eventually including certain public buildings. Sites should be reserved for them in the original plan and Community Centres should be included. By forethought of this kind, it will be possible to have the Community Centre built in the heart of an estate and adjacent to other public buildings which form the civic centre. The local shops should be closely related to the civic centre and the two together should make the core of the estate. Good planning will make a natural focal point toward which residents will gravitate. In the Townhill Estate at Swansea the original plan, drawn up many years ago, reserved certain sites in a central position for public buildings. The new Community Centre occupies one of the best of these and benefits from its position.

On council housing estates where the original plan has not reserved suitable sites for public buildings, an attempt should be made to relate the Community Centre to whatever has proved by experience to be the natural gathering point for the population. This will mean that it must be near the main shopping district, the cinemas, etc. Wherever possible the relation to the school and playing fields should be close.

The same conditions apply to the location of a Community Centre on a tenement estate. Under ideal conditions a site for some form of community building will have been reserved in the original plan. It should be adjacent to, or actually included in, the central open space which should form the 'lung' of any large group of block dwellings. When favourable conditions of this kind do not exist, the Community Centre should at least be placed close to the estate and to the shops and other community facilities which are serving it. Care should be taken that it is not cut off from the tenements by busy traffic arteries which will prevent it from ever becoming an integral part of the community life.

Locating a Community Centre in an old neighbourhood should not prove more difficult than in new areas. In fact, the pattern of community life will already be clearly established and a little careful study should soon reveal the outlines of existing neighbourhood units. Once these have been defined it will be easy to find the natural centre and to seek a suitable site for a community building. Again the relation to shops, schools, and other public buildings should be considered and the Community Centre should not be cut off from the neighbourhood by important traffic ways. Before locating or building in any area, however, a study should be made of any accommodation which already exists, such as Settlements, Clubs, or Public Halls. It will then be possible to put the new Centre in the best position where it will not overlap an area served by a similar building, and the survey will show what type of rooms are most needed at the Centre.

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\* The plan of the Estate was done by the late Sir Raymond Unwin, F.R.I.B.A., M.T.P.I.

The problem of locating sites will be changed and probably simplified if the idea of combining the school and the Community Centre is developed. Schools have always formed natural focal points for neighbourhood life and, because they have no political or denominational ties, they are in many ways ideal partners for the Community Centre. Adding to old school buildings would make all sorts of planning difficulties, but where new schools are being considered there are great possibilities. The problem of separate sites would be eliminated, and an even distribution in all areas would be better assured if Centres were adjacent to or combined with schools.

The way in which one form of Community Centre has been combined with schools in rural areas of Cambridgeshire has been discussed above. At Grimsby and Norwich proposals for Community Centres adjacent to schools and using certain rooms in common had been developed before the war. The Centres were not to have been administered by the school authorities, but merely aided financially through the local education authority. From the planning viewpoint the combination does not present great difficulties. The Community Centre could have its separate quarters which would include an office, adult and juvenile common rooms and game rooms, committee rooms, and a canteen. It could be connected by a covered way to a part of the school building which it would share with the school, that is, to the Assembly Hall, Gymnasium and a block of rooms devoted to Crafts, Domestic Science, Art, etc. The remainder of the building which contains mainly the regular classrooms would be reserved for the use of the school. The rooms which are to be shared would be used by the school in the daytime, probably up until 5 p.m., and by the Community Centre in the evenings. The chief drawback of this scheme, which obviously has much to recommend it in economy of land and building, is that the school may try to exercise too much authority over the Community Centre, and that the latter might thereby lose much of the independence and democratic spirit which are so important to its successful development.

Where adults are concerned this combination has advantages. It acts as an incentive to continue education and gives them an opportunity to understand the educational opportunities which their children are having. In the United States the local elementary or secondary school has always acted as a Community Centre. The Assembly Hall and Gymnasium are used by adult groups on certain afternoons and evenings, and some of the classrooms are used for club meetings and lectures.

Once a suitable location is fixed, the choice of an actual building site and its planning are important considerations. Even when a Centre is well located in relation to the neighbourhood, it may suffer from being on a bad site. When no reservation has been made in the original town plan, it may be hard to find a piece of ground in a commanding position which enjoys a maximum of sunshine and fresh air, and if possible, a decent view. The site of the Frecheville Community Centre in Sheffield is not only near the local shops, but on the slope of a hill behind them where it can be easily seen by all the residents in their daily comings and goings. It has a view over open countryside beyond the estate and gets the full benefit of any sunshine. The new Community Centre at Swansea is another case where the site itself is really good.

If a site is small and cramped it will not only detract from the appearance of the building but will make any re-arrangement or extensions impossible. The possibility of future extensions either to the Centre or to the site must be remembered when the choice is first made. If a large piece of ground cannot be purchased at the outset, the adjacent properties should be available



and suitable for later acquisition. Where it is possible, however, the original site should be large enough to allow for any future additions to the building which may reasonably be expected.

The treatment of a Community Centre site will affect both the appearance and efficiency of the building. Given an adequate site, the building can be placed in a dignified position and a welcoming approach can be arranged. A large plot of ground will add nothing to the appearance of a Centre which is crowded forward or jammed into one corner of it. On the other hand, the building need not be placed so that it occupies the very middle of the site, leaving only narrow strips around it. The Filwood Park Social Centre in Bristol illustrates this last point. A really adequate site is almost completely filled and what ground is left is in useless borders or in the nearly useless central courtyard.

Many Community Centres report that the upkeep of grounds is an extremely difficult problem. In numerous cases any attempt at gardens or grass has been abandoned, and children or young people are blamed for the shabby appearance. It is natural then that the cases where attractive gardens are maintained stand out as shining examples. There is no doubt about their tonic effect on people who use the Centre. The whole appearance and atmosphere of the building are improved and the attitude of members is involved.

In two cases where the approach to the Community Centre is through well-kept and delightful gardens, their maintenance is in the hands of the Local Authority. At the Manor Community Centre in Sheffield the front gardens and the bowling greens and tennis courts at the rear were the right kind of setting for the building. The gardens and recreational facilities were maintained by the Municipality and were respected by the local residents. The St. Helier Community Centre near London is surrounded by the original gardens which belonged to the old house. Several rough fields are reserved for children's play areas, and the carefully-tended gardens are not open to children unless accompanied by adults. At both these Centres the necessary supervision and responsibility is felt to be worth while. The whole matter seems to be one for proper psychology and supervision. In both instances the Centre was either built or remodelled by the Local Authority which took over the care of the gardens as a matter of course. In the case of the Downham Community Centre, grounds which the association originally owned and attempted to use as playing fields were eventually deeded to the Local Authority which was able to give them the care and attention which they needed.

There are practical matters to be considered in dealing with the Community Centre site. The proper orientation of the building to receive a maximum of sunshine or daylight in certain public rooms is important.\* Prevailing winds should be studied and windows sheltered where possible from the coldest and strongest winds. Access to the site for both pedestrians and motor cars should be carefully planned. The approach for people who come on foot should be separated from that used by bicycles and motor vehicles. A shelter for prams near the main entrance to the building will be required (and another near the door to the Mothers' Welfare Clinic when there is one). Cycle sheds of some kind must be provided where they can be easily seen from the Centre and are out of reach of possible thieves. It is true that in most Community Centres the members are not car-owners, but the situation may alter in future, and in some cases (Frecheville, Impington Village College) a good percentage of those who come to the Centre do own cars. A car park, or room for a future one, might well be included.

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\*This matter is mentioned in connection with individual rooms.

In many Centres provision has not been made in planning the building or the site for service to the kitchen, workshops, etc. In a small Centre this does not cause great inconvenience, but in a building of any size it is important to have a service door where goods for the canteen may be delivered. A service drive for delivery vans, coal lorries, etc., should be included in the site plan.

The relation of the Village Hall to the neighbourhood which it serves is simpler than in the case of most Community Centres. This is because the physical pattern of the village is simple, its focal points being merely a few shops, one or two public houses, the church and chapel, and the school. It is rarely difficult to find a site for the Hall near the centre of the village. Often it can be related to a common or central open space or to the school and playing fields.

#### Planning of the Community Centre :

A danger to be avoided in planning Community Centres is the easy acceptance of an "ideal plan". It must not be assumed that a plan type for Community Centres can be evolved which can be applied in some form to nearly all the buildings in question. It will always be impossible to arrive at a universal or ideal plan because local conditions of character, climate, and site will demand an individual solution to their particular problem. It will be a pity if future Centres tend to follow a rigid pattern and fail to take an imaginative advantage of the possibilities which exist in their particular case.

One of the best safeguards against standardisation is an active Community Association which is in existence before the Community Centre is planned or built. A Community Association will rapidly develop its own special activities and interests and will wish to see them expressed in terms of bricks and mortar. The relation between the Association and those who plan the Centre can be the same as that which exists between the client and the architect.

In all Community Centres there are, however, certain constant factors for which we must plan. There are, first of all, the people who will use the building, and, secondly, a comprehensive pattern of activities, any or all of which may take place everywhere.

#### The People for Whom we Plan :

There are two sharp divisions in the group of persons who use Community Centres. The clearest comes between adults and juveniles (the under twenties). There is much argument as to whether one Community Centre should be provided for their joint use, or whether the two age groups should be separated completely. One school of thought calls for two different buildings, while the other, which is most accepted in the new Community Centres, feels that a separate wing with its own entrance is the proper solution to the juvenile problem.

The important spirit behind the movement and the whole idea of the Community Centre is embodied in the title itself. If the Community is based on the family, then surely the Community Centre should be a new means of preserving or even of enriching family life. If all members of a family, no matter of what age or sex, use the one building or group of buildings, they are more likely to look upon themselves as members of a larger community from which they receive certain benefits and to which they owe certain services. If the adults and



children do not owe allegiance to a single Community Association, or even to the single building, which is an expression of the Association in concrete form, they are less likely to develop a strong communal spirit. These considerations speak strongly in favour of one community group to be used by young and old alike. The youth section might of course be in a wing or even in a separate block which is closely connected to the major centre and shares some rooms in common.

Within the framework of the building, however, it is necessary to segregate adults from juveniles. Obviously, the two will have different activities and will need separate accommodation. Owing to the noisy nature of youthful activities their rooms should be cut off in some way from those used by adults. The new Community Centre at South Reading has solved the problem by putting the juniors in one wing and the adults in another with the Assembly Hall acting as insulation between the two. In this case, each wing has its own entrance and the one warden for the building is forced to have an office by each. The problem of supervision here will be difficult when both groups are using the Centre. A single central entrance to be used by both adults and juveniles would have made the supervision easier and, if the circulation system were properly planned, need not have led to difficulties.

The question of adequate space for young people needs consideration. In the case of the Slough Social Centre it has already been explained that the amount of floor space devoted to juniors is equal to that allotted to adults although the junior membership is only a quarter of the adult membership. In the Filwood Social Centre in Bristol a series of small rooms were planned for juveniles which have not proved to be suitable for their purpose. In many other Centres, no special accommodation for young people has been provided, although most secretaries and wardens seem to feel that the important ground work must be done among the juveniles.

The other clear division is between the two sexes. Where adults are concerned it is not so important, and opinion from many Centres agrees that mixed activities help to foster true community spirit. There are certain rooms which will be designed for the special use of either men or women, for instance, sewing-rooms and demonstration kitchens for women, and workshops and billiards rooms for men.

Established juvenile organisations favour some form of segregation for girls and boys. Two methods are proposed. The first calls for separate rooms and in some cases separate entrances. The second suggests alternate use of the same rooms. Where funds and space are limited this second method might be adopted, but it is not ideal and cuts the scope of any youth programme in half. Although youth leaders in the past have been accustomed to separation and are still doubtful of mixed activities, current opinion is swinging the other way. Where proper supervision is provided and certain rooms kept separate, mixed youth centres are now considered a safe proposition.

If it is assumed that a single main entrance which can be used for grown persons and children alike is most desirable and in the long run most practical in a Centre of moderate size, then the argument for different entrances for boys and girls breaks down. The best arrangement for the space devoted to the under twenties would surely be somewhat similar to that of the adult wing. There should be rooms devoted to boys' activities and others reserved for the girls, but there should also be some room or rooms which they share in common. If they are to grow up with any understanding of community life and its possibilities, they should have a training in working and playing together. When they

reach the age of twenty they cannot be expected to understand and respect the facilities which they will be offered as adults, if they have had no experience in leading a normal social life.

In the Village Hall plan the accommodation is usually so limited that no attempt is made to provide separate rooms for adults and juveniles or for boys and girls. The right of all ages to use the premises is recognised. Both men's and women's organisations use the Hall regularly, and children's or young people's groups also meet there. Because Village Halls are not run on a membership basis, but are let to various groups, the schedule of activities can be arranged so that different ages and interests do not conflict.

#### Functions for Which We Plan :

A Community Centre which is designed to meet the special needs of one group may not suit the needs of another. Or it may be completely out-dated after ten or fifteen years. It is such variations which make it impossible to arrive at an ideal plan for a Community Centre and unwise to adhere strictly to one type of plan. There are, however, certain constant elements in the life which takes place in Community Centres which will make some planning relationships unchangeable. Among these is the administrative side of the Centre's organisation.

#### Administration :

The governing body of most Centres is an executive committee or council of the Community Association. The executive function will be reflected in the plan by a council chamber (in large buildings) or a committee room. In most cases, the executive will meet in a committee room which is also available for other meetings and small group activities. On plan, such a room should not be situated next to others where there is likely to be noise or disturbance.

The daily executive control of a Centre is nearly always in the hands of a warden\* or secretary, who is also secretary of the Community Association. His office must be in a strategic point from which he can exercise some supervision over the coming and going of members of the Centre. He must have some privacy yet see what is happening around him. Members and strangers who visit the building should be able to find the office at once. It should, therefore, be next to the main entrance. A glazed door or hatch in the wall will enable him to see who is entering or leaving. The hatch is important for enquiries. The office should be large enough for the warden to receive two or three visitors at one time and still have room enough for desk, cupboard, and shelf fittings. Where space permits, a separate room for interviews is convenient.

The office at the Frecheville Centre in Sheffield is excellent as far as size and equipment are concerned, but does not have a view of the main entrance although it is near it. At the Pilwood Park Social Centre the warden's office is well placed and the long window on to the interior courtyard gives a view of all parts of the building. The office itself, however, is too small. Other offices, such as the one at the Manor Centre in Sheffield, are too large. Had

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\* There is certain objection to the term "Warden". Perhaps Secretary more accurately describes the position of the Chief Executive Officer.



they been better planned and equipped with built-in fittings much valuable floor space could have been saved.

Living accommodation for the full-time, paid, secretary or warden is a controversial subject. Opinion is divided into two groups, each of which has strong arguments to support its case. The first is composed of wardens who prefer to live on the premises and feel that it is the only way to do their job properly. They feel that to live away from the Centre is to shirk the full responsibility involved. Those who hold this opinion often have a background of settlement work and look upon the Community Centres movement as a missionary enterprise.

Among the wardens who prefer to live away from the Community Centre there is a strong feeling that it is the only way to retain any vestige of individual or family life. They point out that a 12 or 14-hour day is not unusual and that a complete break from the Centre atmosphere is necessary. Majority opinion seems to favour this view.

The solution again seems to depend on the individual problem - that is, the particular warden involved. When he chooses not to live at the Centre experience shows that he should live in the neighbourhood and become a part of the community. In the case of the Watling Centre, where the secretary lives in a council house on the estate, he has become a trusted and respected member of the community. At both the Manor and the Frecheville Centres in Sheffield the present secretaries were already local residents before they took up Community Centre work, and they live in houses on their respective estates.

When the warden does live at the Centre, which is most likely in closely developed urban surroundings, it is important that he should have privacy. The top floor of the Centre, or of one wing, might be entirely devoted to his living quarters. Wherever possible there should be a separate outside entrance to his flat. At the North Kensington Community Centre the warden's flat was on the second floor above the new Assembly Hall. A small flight of exterior stairs led to her private door.

The caretaker of a Community Centre is also concerned with the daily control of the building. Where there is not a full-time man for this job the warden is forced to take on many extra responsibilities and tends to become a caretaker himself. Although there are cases where a caretaker lives at the Centre it is not the best arrangement. There is a tendency for caretakers to be a bit domineering with members. They are often on the premises when the warden is away and make poor deputy wardens. Living at the Centre accentuates this situation. The most convenient plan is for the caretaker to live nearby, and to have well-defined hours of duty.

#### Activities :

Although the activities at a Centre will change over a period of years, it will undoubtedly always be possible to divide them into social, recreational, or educational groups - in peacetime, at any rate. Each of these will require recognition in the plan, and experience has shown that certain relationships are most practicable.

In the long run, social activities form the backbone of a Community Centre programme and help to popularise others. Financially, they are a necessity because they help to raise current funds. Among the most popular are whist

drives, dances, socials, teas, billiards, table tennis, and darts. The whist drives and dances are the usual standbys for drawing crowds and raising money, the former being most popular among the older members and the latter with the younger ones.

In terms of physical planning the social activities call for a large hall, a smaller hall, games rooms, common rooms, committee rooms, canteen and kitchen. The number and size of these rooms will depend on the size of the Centre, but they form the skeleton plan in any community building.

#### Assembly Hall :

The Assembly Hall will be used for dramatics, dances, socials, and for large meetings. In existing Centres the Halls usually seat between 250 and 400 persons. A Hall for about 350 has proved most economic because an audience of this size is needed to pay expenses and provide a profit when entertainments are given.

The Assembly Hall, owing to its size and the number of persons likely to use it at one time, will be one of the most important features in the plan. It must be easily reached from other parts of the Centre, but its principal entrance should be separate. If the Hall has its own entrance with cloakrooms and lavatories adjoining it can be used more successfully as an independent unit. At the Frecheville Community Centre an excellent Assembly Hall suffers through being inaccessible except through the single entrance to the Centre, and through not having its own cloakrooms and lavatories. At the North Kensington Centre the new Hall was sensibly provided with its own entrance and cloakrooms, and could be reached from the refreshment room in the main building. This connection was good because it made the kitchen serve the Hall without congestion. At the same time, an extra passageway from the Centre proper to the rear of the stage would have been useful.

A well-planned and equipped stage is a great stimulus to amateur dramatics, and extra expense at the outset is usually justified by later results. The dressing-rooms behind the stage are often inadequate in existing Centres and sometimes open directly on to the stage instead of on to a passageway behind it. In many cases the dressing-rooms are separated by a folding and sliding partition so that they can be used as one for an extra committee room. Where noise between the two rooms does not matter, it is a good plan to have such a flexible arrangement if space in the Centre is limited. The rooms are not, however, ideally located or designed for committee rooms.

The stage should be from 3'3" to 3'6" high and from 15' to 20' deep. It should project beyond the proscenium arch so that singers and speakers may step forward and be heard clearly. A proscenium arch that is fixed in a fairly low position suitable for dramatics may be bad for musical and choral work. It is better to have a high one which can be lowered by the use of pelmets for dramatic work. Footlights will be needed but should be of the folding or removable type. In Birmingham the problem of stage planning and equipment has been carefully studied. Mr. S.T. Walker, F.R.I.B.A., consulting architect to the Birmingham Council for Community Associations, considers good stages and dressing-rooms to be among the most important items in Community Centre planning, and has designed a number of really fine stages in the Birmingham area.

A gramophone with amplifiers at the stage end of the Hall is a necessary item of equipment. It can be designed for use in connection with a 16 mm.



cinema projector for which a removable screen will be needed. Although most of the films shown in Community Centres are of a cultural type and available in non-inflammable film, others may be shown, which means that the projection room must comply with local fire regulations. There should be a lock-up cupboard for storing the gramophone and projector.

There are many social activities which are too small to need the Assembly Hall, yet are too large to be held in any of the other rooms. Weekly dances and whist drives, play rehearsals, and some meetings come in this group. A smaller hall, to seat between one and two hundred persons, is a real need in most community buildings. It can be used for lectures in connection with the educational programme as well as for social gatherings. The Watling Community Centre at present has only the small hall, but plans to have a large Assembly Hall as well. The Filwood Social Centre has no such room of intermediate size, and this is considered to be one of its major drawbacks. The Lecture Hall, as such a room might be called, should have a raised platform at one end, with a blackboard and roller screen behind it. There should also be a cupboard for storing the lantern, epidiascope, and other equipment.

#### Games Room :

The number and type of games rooms which need be included in the plan of a Community Centre will vary with size and local needs. The most popular games are billiards, table tennis, darts, and card games. The first two require a great deal of floor space. Billiards in particular is likely to become a monopoly enterprise at the expense of other games, but its popularity varies according to the part of the country in which the Centre is located. Billiards, of course, is a paying proposition, and for that reason many Centres include it even at the sacrifice of other activities.

In planning a Centre where it is possible to have two or more Games Rooms, the billiards and table tennis should be kept separate from the more quiet games like darts and cards. In a smaller Centre where only one room can be used for games, it would be unwise to devote this entirely to billiards until experience has shown a great demand for it amongst the members who already use the Centre for other reasons. At the small Manor Community Centre in Sheffield the one Games Room was originally designed as a billiards room to the exclusion of all other games. The billiards attracted a crowd of men who were not otherwise interested in the Centre and did not respect its purpose or its facilities. The result was that only a small section of the community which was interested in billiards used the Centre at all and it became a rather inferior Men's Club. This was later remedied by removing the billiard table altogether.

Games Rooms for both adults and juveniles should be well lit and have plenty of storage space for card-tables and table-tennis trestles (9'0" x 4'0"). Darts are popular in all parts of the country and can be considered when the Games Room is planned. At the Impington Village College a separate "alley" in the Games Room is for darts players.

#### Common Room :

Just as the Community Centre should be the natural hub of the neighbourhood, the Common Room should be the focal point of the Community Centre. It should be what its name implies, a common gathering ground where new acquaintances are made and old friendships cemented. It must be situated so that most

## Library :

Many of the newer Centres have been planned to include a Branch Public Library which will be an asset and help to draw new members. If the Library can be reached from the main entrance directly, a separate entrance is not needed. The Centre's Reading Room may be used in connection with the Library providing it can be cut off from the lending department when the librarian is not on duty. The lending room and a storage room for books will be the only extra rooms required. When a lending library is included in one of the other rooms of the Centre, such as the Common Room, the bookcases can be opened only at specific times.

## Gymnasium :

The Physical Training and Recreation Act of 1937 gave a great fillip to the voluntary physical training programme in Great Britain. It accounted for the appearance of many gymnasiums in Community Centres and was largely responsible for their being included in the list of necessities for future Centres.

In large schemes it will be possible to include both a Gymnasium and an Assembly Hall. To combine the two functions is never wise unless economy of space or cost makes it absolutely necessary. There is, first of all, the difficulty of the floor. For a Gymnasium it should be laid with boards running the short way of the room to make it safe for physical training. The Hall should have its floor-boards laid the long way to make a better surface for dancing. There is also the question of maintenance, which is much greater if the two functions are combined. When a room is used as a Gymnasium for one part of the week and for dancing at other times, the floor surface must be continually changed. At Currock House in Carlisle, great waste of time and money is involved in polishing the floor for week-end dances and then removing the polish with wet sawdust for the physical training classes. Finally, there is the question of the stage which must be removed when the Hall is used as a gymnasium. Folding or collapsible stages are never as firm as others and storage space underneath is eliminated.

Gymnasiums at recently-built Centres have had to conform to standards laid down by the Fitness Council for size, equipment, and dressing-rooms. In future they will undoubtedly have to meet some such requirements in order to qualify for Government aid. In small Centres and in Village Halls where the one room will have to serve a dual purpose, its use for a Gymnasium will have to be the primary consideration in planning. That is, the size, shape, floor surface, and dressing-rooms will have to meet proper requirements. Gymnasiums are usually 60' x 30' and 16'6" high; but if they are to be used for badminton, the height must be 25'0". Because of the noise and heat generated in the room, its two long sides should be kept free for windows. A storage room and an instructor's room are necessary items to accompany the gymnasium. The former should be at least 6'0" wide and have double doors on to the gymnasium. Proper equipment for a gymnasium is a specialised affair and expert advice will be needed for its arrangement.

## Public Health Services :

In a few existing Centres, clinics are included in the plan, and it is proposed to include them in many new Centres. Regular visitors to the clinic will become acquainted with the Centre and all it has to offer and vice versa. A clinic to serve the whole family, not merely mothers and children, would be a future possibility and worth considering in connection with Community Centres.



Like the Library, the Clinic need not have a separate entrance if it can be easily reached from the main hall. A waiting-room with cloakrooms and lavatories adjoining, an office for the Medical Officer or dentist, A Nurse's or weighing-room, and a records' office are required. In many cases the Local Authority will pay the Community Association for the use of the rooms as they do at the Goldsmiths Community Centre and the North Kensington Centre. The Ministry of Health is agreeable to schemes where the Clinic rooms are used after 5 p.m. for Centre activities. At the Goldsmiths Centre the Clinic is used for dressing-rooms in connection with the stage during the evenings. While this particular combination is not a very practical one (because the back-stage, dressing-room atmosphere hardly fits with that of the clinic) the waiting-room could easily be used for a committee, discussion, or extra games room at convenient times.

#### Services :

In most Community Centres the cloak-rooms and lavatories flank the main entrance. In fact, this position seems to have become a hard-and-fast rule. It is unfortunate, first, because a prominent position adjoining the main entrance could be much better occupied by the Office, Common Room, or Reading Room. It is wasteful to devote the front elevation of the building, which often has the best view and exposure, to lavatories. They might be better located at some less obtrusive point which would be more convenient in relation to the rooms which the members are using. Another real danger in placing lavatories at the main entrance is the fact that they soon become public conveniences for all the neighbourhood. (This has been a great fault in the plan at Filwood Social Centre). Cloakrooms should be separate from lavatories, that is, the latter should not be entered through the cloak-rooms, so that they will not provide such a temptation or excuse for pilfering.

The Assembly Hall should have its own lavatories and cloak-rooms which, in this case, should adjoin the entrance. The cloaks should have a folding counter for the attendant to use. A common mistake is to have smaller cloakrooms and fewer lavatories in connection with the Hall than in the Centre itself, on the grounds that they will be less often used. Actually, they will need to be much larger because of the crowds which will be using the Hall at one time.

Few Centres have enough storage space. Nearly all their activities require some sort of equipment which must be stored away when not being used. This is particularly true of the junior sections. If the games and club-rooms are equipped with permanent, built-in cupboards much of the problem will be eliminated and different groups can store away equipment in their own lock-up cupboard. Window seats and built-in wall benches help to solve the furniture problem and give storage space at the same time. Other storage space either in the basement or attic will be needed for larger articles, and one or two small storerooms on each floor will be useful.

Storage in connection with the Assembly Hall is necessary for its smooth, successful working. When the floor is cleared for dancing (which often happens half-way through an evening), chairs must be quickly put away. A chair store under the stage is the most usual solution, but unless it is at a lower level than the floor of the Hall, it is inconvenient. A small store-room at the same floor level as the Hall and close to it is the most convenient and labour-saving place for the chairs. (It might run parallel to the Hall along one long side, with clerestory lighting above). There must also be storage for stage

properties as near to the back of the stage as possible. Some of the least-used props could be kept under the stage if that space is not needed for chairs.

#### The Village Hall :

The Village Hall consists of one large room with some kind of platform or stage at the end, a kitchen, a committee room, and men's and women's cloakrooms and lavatories. Often there is more accommodation than this, an extra committee room, or a billiards room, for instance. The kitchen and the committee room are usually behind the stage so that they may be used as dressing rooms when shows are being given. Access to each of these rooms from outside without going through the main hall is important, both for their normal use and for their role as dressing rooms. Although this dual use of the kitchen and committee room is not ideal, it is a great economy and if properly planned need not be inconvenient.

Cloakrooms and lavatories are most useful when they are placed near the main entrance to the Hall. Very often they are found at the rear of the Hall adjacent to the kitchen and committee room. It is true that these two rooms are used more frequently than the large main room, but when big crowds are using the building, it is impracticable to have the cloakrooms or lavatories hidden away at the back. The ideal solution, where funds permit, is to have an extra toilet behind the stage, and next to the kitchen and committee room.

The main hall itself is, of course, the most important item in the plan. It should have good natural as well as artificial light. It may often be used as a gymnasium, and this fact should be considered in its planning. Badminton is one of the most popular games in Village Halls at present, and, to be played properly, it requires a ceiling 25'0" high. A frequent economy is to have a folding or sliding stage which can be either removed completely from the hall or reduced to half size when the room is being used for dances or physical training. The proscenium can be constructed so that it remains fixed at the most forward position of the stage, or so that it too can slide back when necessary.

#### The Community Centre Building :

##### Construction :

It is seldom possible to approach a building and be sure at once that it is a Community Centre because it looks like one and could not possibly be anything else. Usually, it might equally well be a school, a library, or a clinic of some kind. In fact, Community Centres appear to be among the few buildings to which no standardised, cut and dried "architectural style" has been applied.

It is a hopeful sign that they have not attempted to conform to one particular style. The movement is still in its infancy and most of the buildings are groping their way toward a suitable form of expression. It is difficult for a Community Centre to avoid looking like some other type of civic building, but it is important that in future they shall develop a character of their own. This can be accomplished in an honest way only by carefully relating and freely expressing the functions of the plan. Recent Community Centres have shown a dangerous tendency to adopt a studied symmetry and a tight neo-classical plan. The result is unpleasant interior courtyards and unnecessary breaks and indentations in the elevations. The new Centre in Reading is an example of such unimaginative planning. Hope for the future lies in an exercise of ingenuity and imagination for each particular case. A Community Centre "style" or character will evolve naturally.



In one or two cases, the Community Centre in its attempt to develop individuality has abandoned dignity. The buildings, particularly on the interior, look like flashy, modernistic cinemas. Although such cheap and tawdry effects may have momentary appeal, they do not wear well. Above all, they do nothing to raise the standards of architectural appreciation among those who use the buildings.

To avoid rigidity and too great devotion to permanence should be the aim of Community Centre architecture. We have seen how valuable it has been for the Slough Social Centre to have a large volume of space which can be subdivided or re-divided to suit current needs. It is difficult to make changes within a building if the partitions are of  $4\frac{1}{2}$ " brickwork and plastered, and if the plan itself has not taken the possibility into account. Lighter partitions of insulating board on a framework can be more easily altered.

Folding and sliding partitions are often used in Community Centres. Sometimes they divide a Games Room into two small committee rooms, sometimes they divide the Assembly Hall into three rooms. At first glance they seem the ideal solution to the question of flexibility within the given structural shell. Small difficulties such as access to both parts of the room when the partition is closed can be overcome in planning. The annoyance of the metal runner in the floor, on which the partition slides, can be overcome by having it set in a removable strip of flooring which can easily be replaced by a smooth strip when the partition is open. But the question of making such partitions sound-proof has not yet been solved. Heavy curtains have been tried without success. At the Parish Social Centre in Swinton, the framework of the partitions is covered with felt and heavy canvas. At the Featherstone Community Centre the partitions have timber frames, filled with an insulating material and covered with hardboard. However, the ideal, sound-proof, folding and sliding partition is yet to be found. The decision as to whether they are worth using rests with the individual Centre. If they are included, more and different activities can be carried on at one time, but the programme must be carefully planned so that noisy groups do not meet next to quiet ones with only the folding or sliding partition between.

Many Community Centres have found themselves involved in great difficulties when they began to make additions to their buildings. Planners often forgot that the Community Association may change its character and will possibly grow, and therefore will need new accommodation. Unless the Centre is originally planned with the idea that extensions may be added, the whole system of circulation may be upset in the attempt. New rooms may be added which can be reached only by going through others or by going out into the open. The extensions may cut off light from the old parts of the Centre. At the Impington Village College the possibility of future extensions have been considered; both the classroom wing and the Community Centre Wing can be extended without altering the functioning of the building in any way.

Unlike most Community Centres, Village Halls can usually be picked out for exactly what they are. It is difficult for even the most ambitious architect or builder to disguise the few fundamental elements in their plan. It is true that Village Halls often acquire an oddly churchlike character, or that their new red brick and pebbledash stands out like a sore thumb amongst the softly weathered materials of the neighbourhood. But very often the Hall is simply built of local materials, and despite its size, shape, and prominent site, is in harmony with the other buildings of the village.

The Village Hall in its simplest form (as described on page 41) may be all the accommodation which a village with a small static population will require. When it is known at the beginning of planning that the building will not be large enough for the needs of all the community, or that the village is likely to increase its population, then the original plan should take future additions into consideration. The site should be large enough for more building and the original Hall should be placed on the site with extensions in mind.

#### Materials :

Choice of materials will, of course, have much to do with the question of character which was discussed above. The chief consideration in choosing materials should be a neighbourly regard for the houses and other buildings which surround the Centre. If it is to be a real focal point for the community, it should live happily in its surroundings. Colours and textures should be in harmony. The use of materials common to the environment will do much to bring about harmony and will probably be the most economical.

In choosing materials for internal finishes, durability is the keynote. It will be worth while in the long run to spend more at the beginning and avoid the trouble and expense of constant repairs and replacements. Community Centres receive hard wear, often from persons who have not learned to appreciate the value of the buildings they use. If interior finishes can be easily damaged and made dingy, the Centre will lose much of its initial freshness and charm which are important to its work. It is sometimes necessary to enforce very strict supervision to preserve a Centre, but the cheerful community atmosphere will suffer. It is wiser to accept the fact that a Community Centre is bound to get hard and intensive wear, and that it should be prepared for rough treatment.

Interior walls suffer most of all in Community Centres. Usually they are finished in plaster which cracks and chips easily, although in a few cases more durable forms have been tried. A very rough plaster will wear well and not show finger marks, but in a dirty and smoky town atmosphere, this finish would be impractical because air-borne dust would quickly settle on all projections and be impossible to remove.

Where the plaster wall has been abandoned and a different surface tried out, the results have been more successful. In several Centres the interior walls have been left unfinished except for a coating of paint on the bricks. The result is a practically undamageable surface which can be easily repainted. Where interior walls have been covered with a heavy paint which shows the joints of the sand lime bricks only very faintly, the final texture is extremely pleasant, and will probably be more popular with members than a more obviously painted brick wall. At the Impington Village College the surface of the grey sand-lime bricks in the promenade is unpainted and the joints are pointed in yellow cement. The appearance is extremely warm and gay. Unpainted brick walls of a darker colour are not so successful. At the Southgate Community Centre the interior walls of the Assembly Hall are finished in a dark red brick and left unpainted. Although the walls are still fresh and undamaged after several years of hard use, the room is made rather dark and gloomy by the dull wall surface.

It is generally agreed that the brick surface on interior walls is practicable, but it is not always popular. People who use the Centres feel that the surface of brick is inhospitable and unpleasant and detracts from the appearance of a building. There is a touch of institutional atmosphere about it, too.



which is unpopular. The only answer to these arguments is a cheerful colour scheme on a surface which can be easily washed or repainted.

Another alternative to the plastered wall is wood lining, which will stand very hard wear and need not be painted. It will be more expensive than the brick surface, but will not require much upkeep if properly finished at the beginning. Wood panelling or wood boards can be used in various ways to produce rich effects and will probably be more popular with members than brick interior walls. The lining need not be carried to the full height of the room, but only to a point above which there is little likelihood of damage from chairs, tables, and the members themselves. Several Community Centres and a Youth Centre have found the wood lining very durable. It is a mistake to leave the surface of the wood in a natural state, however, because dirt and grime will rub into the walls and be very difficult to remove.

Hardboards and other synthetic panels might well be used in the same way as wood panelling for internal wall surfaces.

Chair rails are a real necessity in all Community Centres even when walls are finished in very hard material. In Assembly Halls, particularly where the chairs are often pushed back against the wall, a rail just at the height of the chair-back will save the surface.

Tiles have been used very successfully as internal window cills in many Centres. They are also frequently used behind and above radiators, in buildings which are centrally heated, because they can be easily cleaned. A more highly-glazed tile can also be used as a dado in passageways and on staircases. Although it increases initial expense, it means a permanent and nearly undamageable surface. If the tiles are used imaginatively, there can be no aesthetic objection to their appearance.

Floor surfaces vary a good deal in existing Community Centres. In most cases the floors of committee rooms, club rooms, and offices are of wide deal boards. Passageways and kitchens often have floors of tile, while lavatory floors are usually of tile or terazzo. When floors are merely of deal boards, the problem of cleaning is increased, unless they are covered with linoleum. The linoleum surface is easy to clean, but must be replaced at fairly frequent intervals in rooms which receive hard daily wear, unless it is of heavy quality. Many of the new Centres have realised the value of a permanent and tough floor surface, and in using wood blocks, have felt that greater expense at the beginning is worth while.

The floors of the Gymnasium and Assembly Hall are of greatest importance. They should both be of hardwood, and in the former the boards should be laid in strips running the short way of the room to make a safe surface for games and exercises. In cases where wood block floors are used, the floor soon becomes dangerous when the room is constantly used as a Gymnasium. An Assembly Hall is not good for dances unless it, too, has a good hardwood floor. Wood block floors can be used for dancing, but unless they are skilfully laid and of very good quality, the surface becomes uneven in time.

#### Equipment :

All equipment in a Community Centre will have to undergo hard and intensive use. Extra expense at the outset will be justified by later savings in

replacement and maintenance. This applies to sanitary and electric fittings, to hardware, recreational equipment, kitchen equipment, etc. In choosing hardware and electric fittings, efficiency and simplicity of design are more important than a showy appearance.

Most Centres are centrally heated and the hot water supply is, therefore, not a problem during the winter. In large Centres it will be worth while to have hot water heated throughout the year from a boiler in the basement. In smaller Centres, some form of electric or gas geyser will be needed in the kitchen to supply hot water during the summer months.

The problem of daily cleaning is a great one at all Centres and much time and expense are involved. Much can be done to ease the problem by choosing hard surfaces for walls and floors which can be easily cleaned. A good suggestion has come from the Frecheville Community Centre for the daily floor sweeping. They propose to have a large vacuum cleaner of the type used in cinemas and schools for picking up the dust and debris which accumulate so quickly in the Halls and passageways. Although expensive at the outset, a cleaner of this kind will save time and labour at a busy Centre.

Equipment in the form of gramophones, amplifiers, cinema projectors, and lanterns, has already been mentioned in connection with the rooms in which they will be used.

#### Furnishings :

Durability is again the keynote in choosing furnishings for a Community Centre, but good design and cheerful colours are equally important. Here is a rare opportunity to influence people, to stimulate a demand for inexpensive, well-designed furniture, and to make apparent the horrors of much cheap modern furniture. In furnishings, good lines should combine with durable materials and easily cleaned surfaces.

Chairs and tables are the major furniture items for a Centre; much of the remainder can be of the permanent, built-in type. The number of chairs required at a given time in a particular room will vary. Some form of folding or stacking chairs will be most practicable. The two types most commonly used are the folding wooden chair and the stacking metal chair. The latter are the best to be found in any Centre. In good design, ease of storage, and cheerful colour possibilities they far surpass the folding wooden chair. Where groups of four attached chairs are required in by-laws, the arrangement can be managed with the stacking metal type. When they are used in the Assembly Hall they can easily be moved from the store-room or from other parts of the building because they are light and slide about easily. Most metal chairs of this kind have backs and seats of heavy canvas, but they can be obtained with a metal basketwork back and seat. At the Mary Ward Settlement they have proved to be the only chair that will resist the hard wear of a Boys' Club. Many tables will be needed for whist drives and socials, and they, too, must be of the folding or stacking type, light to handle, but of durable materials.

The Common Room calls for careful planning and an exercise of imagination where furnishings are concerned. Although materials must be able to resist constant hard wear, they must still have a cheerful and comfortable quality. Arm-chairs and sofas must combine the practical with the attractive. Coverings should be of some tough material which can be easily cleaned, but need not be dark and dull.



Both the adult and juvenile Common Rooms at the Goldsmiths Community Centre are bright and attractive meeting-places. The arm chairs are of light wood with upholstered backs and seats covered in brilliant red or green rexine. The floor is covered with coconut matting in strips which may be rolled back for cleaning. Although this matting is very resistant to ordinary hard wear, dirt accumulates beneath it easily. For the Common Room or any other which needs some form of carpeting, the best type is probably a good quality hair-cord carpet. They are tough and hard-wearing and come in neutral colours which will not easily show the dirt.

Curtains are a relatively inexpensive item, but one often neglected in Community Centres. They are most often included in the Common Room where they are of vital importance in lending a homelike atmosphere. With one or two exceptions, they are seldom used in other rooms, but are always a great addition when they do appear.

At the Goldsmiths' Centre there are unusual and gay curtains in many of the rooms, adding much character to the building which it lacks in other respects.

#### Colour :

Although colour has been mentioned in connection with furnishings, wall surfaces, and trim, it is important enough to be briefly considered by itself. Few people realise the power which colour has to create atmospheres, reactions, and subconscious impressions on the minds of those who see it. Just as a sunny day improves the spirits and makes the first impression of a strange place favourable, colours can make a room live in memory as cheerfully gay, serenely quiet, or morose and melancholy.

In settlements, clubs, and Community Centres dark colours have long been used because they don't show how dirty they really are. Dull when first applied, an accumulation of several years' grime makes little difference to their appearance. On the grounds that light colours need frequent re-painting, they are condemned as expensive and impractical. Chocolate browns, muddy buffs, and liverish greens have taken on an institutional quality calculated to dampen the spirits of the most enthusiastic members of clubs or associations.

If interior surfaces in a Community Centre can be easily cleaned, then cheerful and light colours can be used. In rooms which receive little sunlight, pale but warm yellows or creams on the walls will create a feeling of warmth and sunshine. In rooms which are often flooded with sunlight the walls can be cooler. The palest shades of grey or soft green will give space and light without glare.

Doors and trim instead of being chocolate brown can be pleasant if left unpainted and merely finished with a transparent but protective coating of varnish or oil. Where woodwork is of too cheap a quality to justify this treatment, it can be painted in harmony with wall colours of a particular room or in cheerful, contrasting colours. There is no reason for Community Centres to continue the dark and gloomy tradition of the settlement or working men's club. In fact, there is every reason for them to be alive to all possibilities of creating pleasant surroundings in which to carry on their work.

#### Concluding Remarks :

The relatively few Community Centres which were active before the out-

break of war in 1939, have proved their worth during the past two years. Operating under the strain of difficult war-time conditions, they are showing themselves capable of adjusting to new ideas and duties. Under democratic organisation their programmes have proved adaptable and fluid. Far from fading passively into the background, they have stepped forward and shown that they are capable of performing important community tasks and of becoming established and respected parts of community life.

Although the Community Centre building programme in its peace-time form may have ceased for the present, the provision of similar accommodation is going forward. Social Centres are being built in connection with hostel groups for war workers. In some cases the Social Centres or Clubs which are provided for military and other camps are so situated that they can be used after the war by civilians who are housed in the same neighbourhood.\* The needs which Community Centres were filling in the life of the country still exist and will be even greater in the post-war era of re-planning and reconstruction.

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\* A Community Centre has recently been completed on a First National Housing Trust Estate where adjacent land is occupied by a military camp. This same body had plans before the war for a Community Association Hostel, Convalescent and Rest Home combined with a Holiday Camp. The scheme will be carried out during the war and used as a military camp, but will revert to its original purpose in peace-time.



# C H A R T    II

INDEX TO DESCRIPTIONS OF CENTRES, INSTITUTES, VILLAGE HALLS and SETTLEMENTS, which are to be found in APPENDIX

Town or District	Community Centre or Association	Location	Accommodation	Points of Interest
BIRMINGHAM	11 Centres	10 Council Housing Estates; 1 in private residential district	See Notes on	Birmingham
BRADFORD, YORKS	Swaine House & District Community Assn.	Council Housing Estate	Three Class-rooms and two Nursery School Play-rooms (since war began one classroom and one play-room are used).	Elementary School premises are used by the Association.
BROMLEY, KENT	Downham Community Centre.	L.C.C. Housing Estate	Assembly Hall, Stage, Green Room, Common Room, Juvenile Room, two Committee Rooms, one Clinic Room.	Green Room can be divided by folding partition when used for dressing-rooms. Canteen serves through four hatches to Common Room, Juvenile Room, Green Room, Gardens.
CAERNARVONSHIRE, N. WALES	The Mynytho Village Institute.	Village of 400 persons	Hall, Kitchen, Billiard Room, Lavatories.	Stone construction.
CANNOCK CHASE	Featherstone Community Centre.	Council Housing Estate	Assembly Hall for 350, Stage, Dressing-Rooms, Craft Room, Kitchen.	Hall divided by two sliding and folding partitions to make 3 rooms, 20' x 30'. Centre is one storey, storage space all in roof. Building entirely of timber construction.

CHART II (Contd.)

Town or District	Community Centre or Association	Location	Accommodation	Points of Interest
CANNOCK CHASE	Wimblebury Community Centre.	Small Colliery town	Assembly Hall, temporary platform stage, Kitchen, Baths, Workshop, Committee room.	Hall divided by two sliding and folding partitions to make 3 rooms. Building entirely of timber construction.
CARLISLE	Currook House.	Council Housing Estate	In house: Warden's Office and Flat, Canteen, Kitchen, Library, Small Hall, Men's Room, Women's Room, Girls and Craft Room. Added: Boys' Club Building and Assembly Hall for 350, Showers and Lavatories.	Centre partially housed in old private residence. Youth Hostel included.
CUMBERLAND	Kells & District Community and Miners' Welfare Centre.	Colliery Town	Assembly Hall for 659, Gymnasium, Library, Adult Rooms, Boys' Rooms, Girls' Rooms, Kitchen and Refreshment Rooms, Billiard Rooms, Nursery and Mothers' Room.	Miners' Welfare Institute and Community Centre combined.
DERBYSHIRE, EDENSOR	Chatsworth Institute.	In a village on the Chatsworth Estate.	Mens' Club including bar, smoke room, billiards rooms, library, games room and kitchen in an old hotel converted. A new wing containing Assembly Hall and Committee rooms.	A fine Georgian building successfully adapted for use as a Village Institute.



CHART II (Contd.)

DERBYSHIRE, HATHERSAGE	Hathersage Memorial Hall.	Village of 2100. Semi-suburban population, 11 miles from Sheffield.	Main Hall, Committee rooms, kitchen, billiard room, extra large room for general purposes, and Cloakrooms.	Part of the building adapted from a former Chapel. Close association of the Hall with tennis courts, bowling greens, playing fields, and an outdoor swimming pool.
DERBYSHIRE, ROWSLEY.	Rowsley Village Hall.	Village of 230 persons.	Main Hall, kitchen and Committee room, cloakrooms and entrance lobby.	Pleasant use of local stone and good planning of the building in relation to the site.
DERBYSHIRE, YOULGREAVE	Youlgreave Village Hall.	Good central position in village of purely rural character.	Main Hall, kitchen, library, Girls' Club room, billiard room, committee room, and cloakrooms.	Roof and walls of main building are of corrugated iron sheeting. In good condition after 27 years use.
DUNFERMLINE	Baldrigeburn Institute (Carnegie Institute)	Mixed residential neighbourhood.	Library, Reading Room, Women's Room (3 are used as one for Assembly Hall) Children's Room, Games' Room, Billiards Room, Office Workshop, Changing Room and Baths.	Very good construction and finishes have stood up to continuous hard wear and have commanded respect from persons using Institutes.
DUNFERMLINE	Rosyth Institute (Carnegie Institute).	Council Housing Estate.	Library, Children's Room, Child Welfare Clinic, Ladies' Room, Common Room, Billiards Room, Games' Room, Assembly Hall, Changing Rooms, Baths.	Same tradition of good construction and finishes. Differs from other Institutes in Dunfermline in having site reserved in original town plan.

CHART II (Contd.)

Town or District	Community Centre or Association	Location	Accommodation	Points of Interest
LIVERPOOL	Norris Green Community Centre.	Council Housing Estate.	A typical Council house for offices. Timber hut with stage, dressing-rooms, Kitchen, Cloakrooms.	Proposals by City Architect for New Centre.
BLOOMSBURY, LONDON.	Mary Ward Settlement.	Mixed residential and commercial district.	Residents' quarters, Dining-room and Common Room. For members : Library, Lecture Room, Canteen, Class-rooms, Boys' Club, Gymnasium, Girls' Club, Little Theatre.	Sound construction which has stood up to over 50 years' hard use.
BETHNAL GREEN, LONDON.	Oxford House.	Mixed residential and commercial district.	Residential quarters with Library, Common Room, Dining Hall, Chapel. For members : Assembly Hall, Small Hall, Men's Club, Canteen, Library, Card Room, Games' Room, Club and Committee Rooms.	Built 1882, but still very useful despite continuous hard wear.
MORDEN	St. Helier Community Centre.	Council Housing Estate.	Office, two Meeting Rooms, Canteen, Clinics. Hall in a timber hut.	Centre in an old house now used for this purpose and for County Offices. Fine gardens and grounds.



CHART II (Contd.)

NORTH DOWNHAM ESTATE, S.E. LONDON.	Goldsmiths' Community Centre.	L.C.C. Housing Estate. (same as above).	Assembly Hall for 400, Gymnasium, Mothers and Infants Welfare Clinics, Adult Section, Juvenile Section.	Clinic used also as dressing-rooms in connection with stage. Interior walls finished in brick painted with plastic paint. Open cloakrooms off entrance. Interior decoration by trained consultant.
NOTTINGHAM	Cropwell Butler Village Hall.	Village	Hut 24' x 40', temporary stage with Chair Store under, Kitchen, Lavatories.	Entirely of timber construction. Kitchen used for dressing-room when plays are produced.
OXFORD	The South Ward Social Guild.	Mixed residential neighbourhood.	Assembly Hall, Club Rooms for Boys and Girls, Billiards Room, Table- tennis room.	House in a converted waterworks. Stage in hall is movable. Hall divided by folding partition.
OXFORD	Wolvercote Community Centre.	Council Housing Estate.	Common Room, Kitchen, Club Room, Table Tennis room, Boys' Room, Warden's Flat.	Old farmhouse used for Centre. All small rooms a drawback.
OXFORD	Osney Social Club	Residential district (railway workers).	One large room with stage and kitchen.	Premises are an old Methodist Chapel.
READING	South Reading Community Centre.	Council Housing Estate.	Assembly Hall for 400, Gymnasium, Library, Adult Wing, Juvenile Wing.	New building completed 1940. Separate Adult and Juvenile Entrances cause duplication of office and supervision.

CHART II (Contd.)

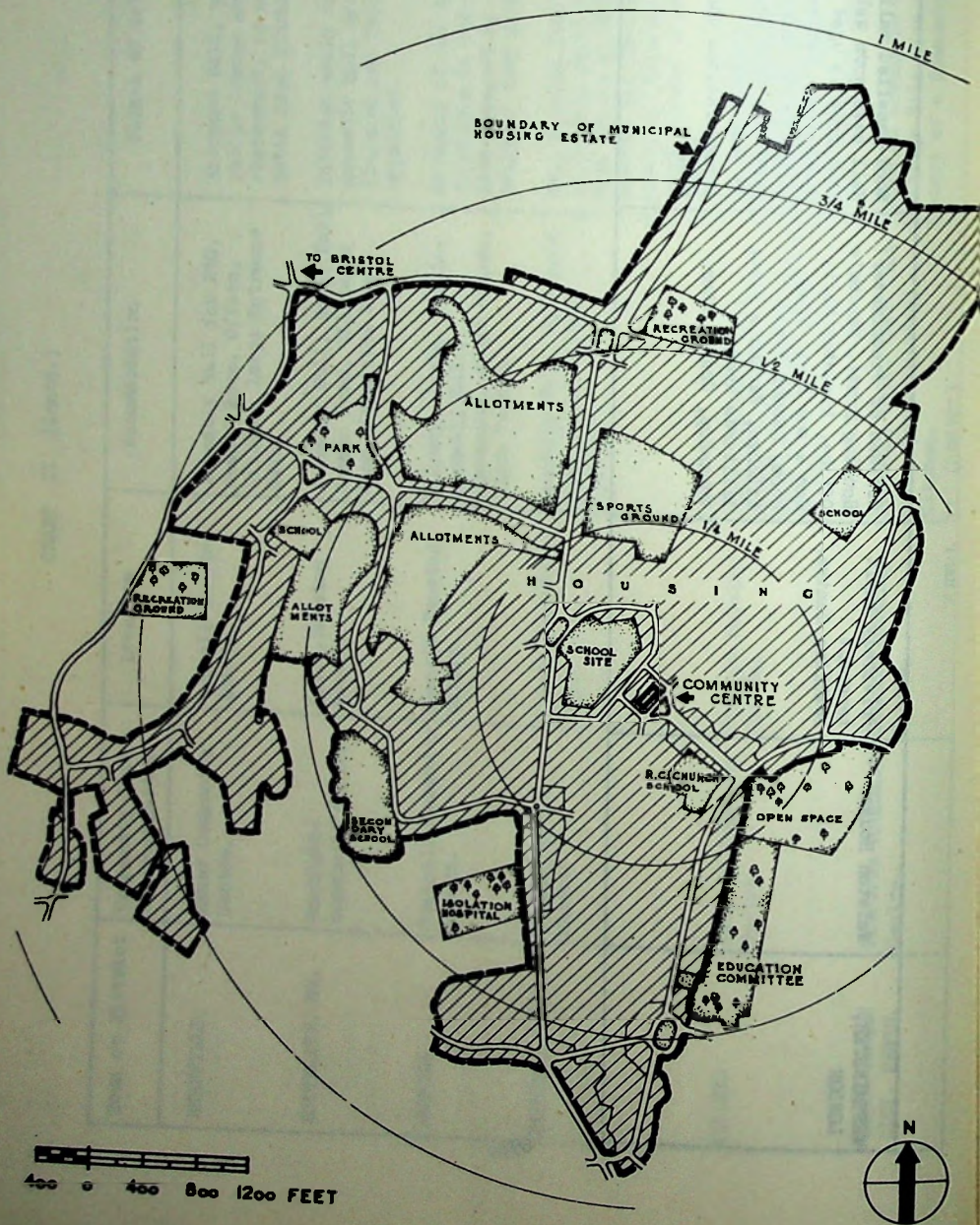
Town or District	Community Centre or Association	Location	Accommodation	Points of Interest
SHEFFIELD	Manor Community Centre.	Council Housing Estate.	Assembly Hall for 250, Games' Room, Office, Kitchen, large Entrance Hall.	Entrance Hall, used as public lounge and restaurant, is served by hatch from Kitchen.
SOUTHGATE, Mx.	Southgate Community Centre.	L.C.C.Housing Estate.	Assembly Hall, Small Hall, Common Room, Billiards Room, Committee Room.	Interior walls of Assembly Hall are finished red brick and unpainted.
SWANSEA	Townhill Community Centre.	Council Housing Estate.	Library, Dental Clinic, Assembly Hall, Gymnasium, Adult Centre, Youth Centre.	Grouping of all these functions in one building. Site reserved in original town plan.
SWINTON, LANCs.	Parish Social Centre.	Mixed Residential Area.	Assembly Hall, Billiards Room, Common Room, Kitchen.	Hall divided into 3 rooms by folding partition. Roof joists in Hall exposed and decorated. Wall surfaces (interior) of very rough plaster prevent damage.
WATLING	Watling Community Centre.	Council housing Estate.	Small Assembly Hall, Common Room, two Committee rooms, Canteen, Office.	Small Assembly Hall a drawback. No special accommodation for juveniles. Plans for extensions are interesting.
MELWYN GARDEN CITY, HERTS.	Peartree Community Centre.	Council Housing Estate,	Assembly Hall, four Club Rooms (or Committee) Kitchen.	More an extension of Village Hall plan than start of a Community Centre.



CHART II (Contd.)

<p>WESTMINSTER, LONDON</p>	<p>Walston House.</p>	<p>Privately-built tenement Dwelling Centre.</p>	<p>Offices of Westminster Housing Trust, Warden's Office, Assembly Hall, Men's and Boys' Club Room, Common Room, Kitchen, Warden's Flat, Billiards Room, Workshop, Crafts Room.</p>	<p>Wood-panelled walls of Hall have worn well even when room is used for Gymnasium. Canteen separated by folding partition from Common Room so that cookery demonstrations can take place.</p>
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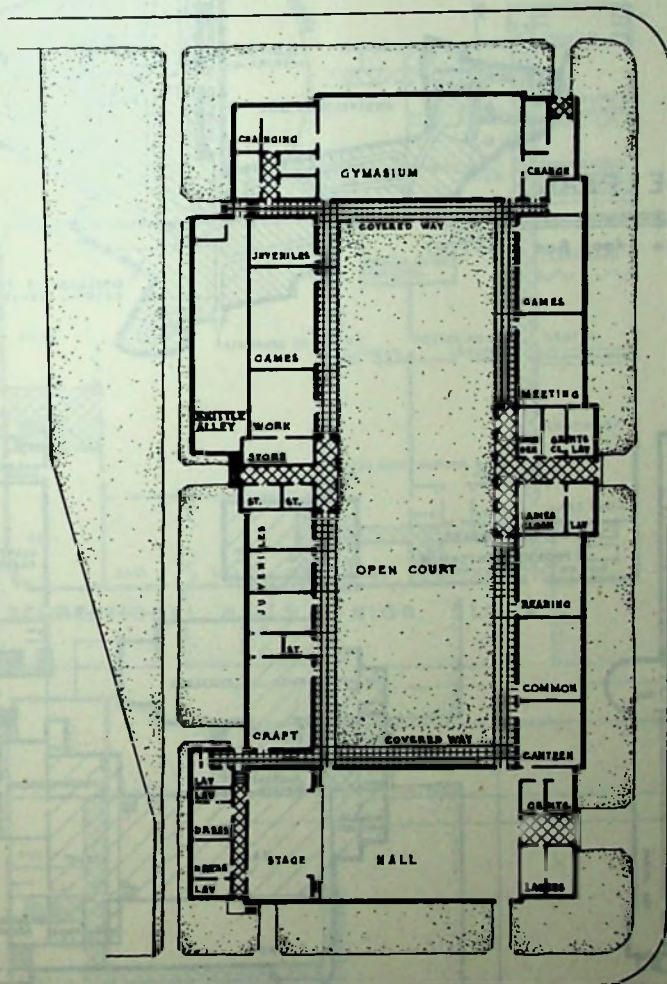
# 1 FILWOOD PARK HOUSING ESTATE, BRISTOL





# FILWOOD SOCIAL CENTRE FILWOOD PARK, BRISTOL

BY THE HOUSING ARCHITECT  
CITY & COUNTY OF BRISTOL



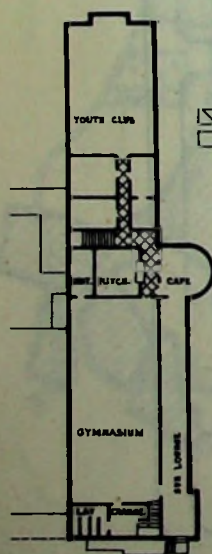
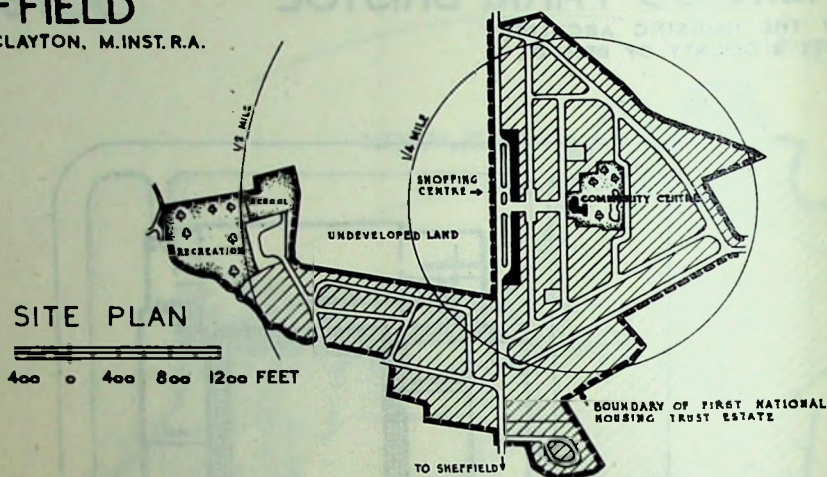
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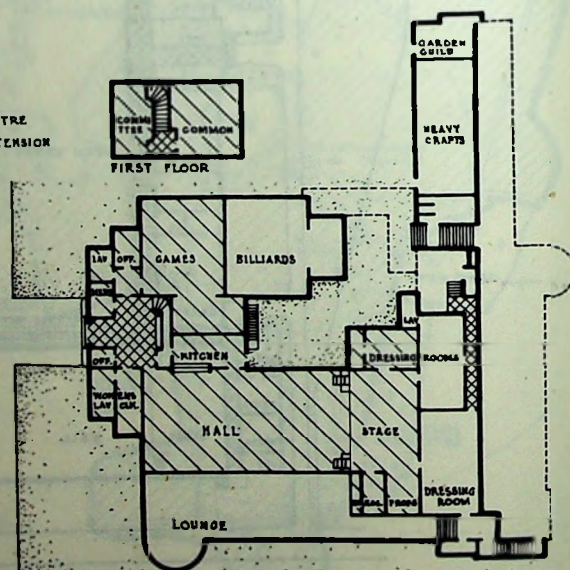
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# FRECHEVILLE COMMUNITY CENTRE SHEFFIELD

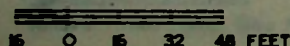
BY A.E. CLAYTON, M.INST.R.A.



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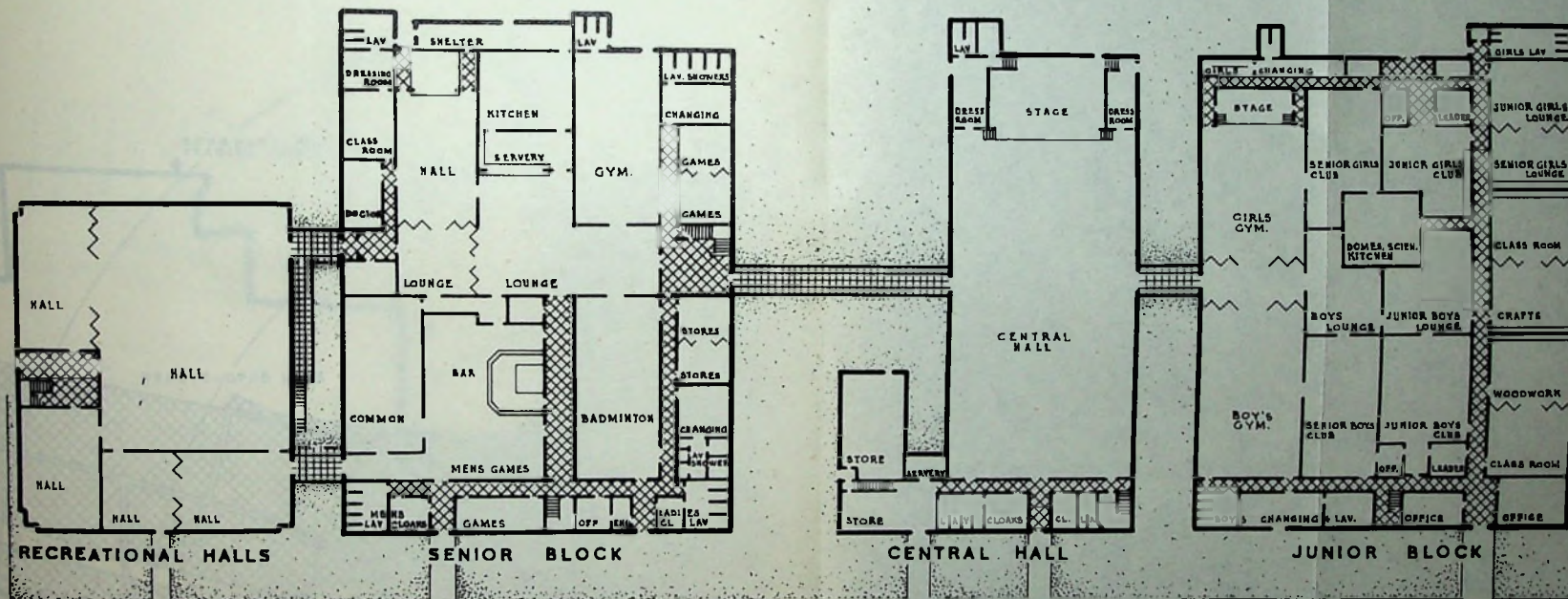




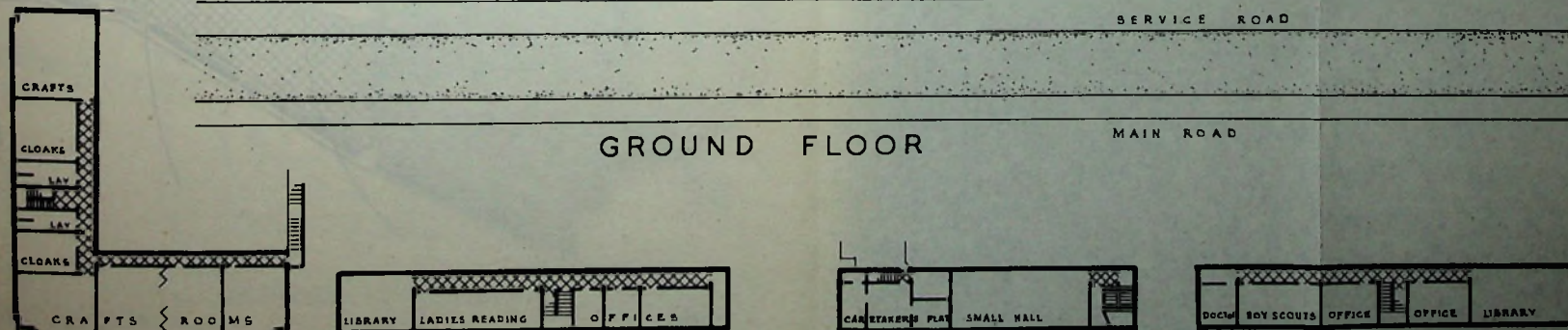
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BY W. H. L. PRICE F.S.I., L.R.I.B.A.

SLOUGH TRADING ESTATE  
SLOUGH, BUCKS

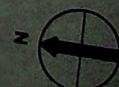


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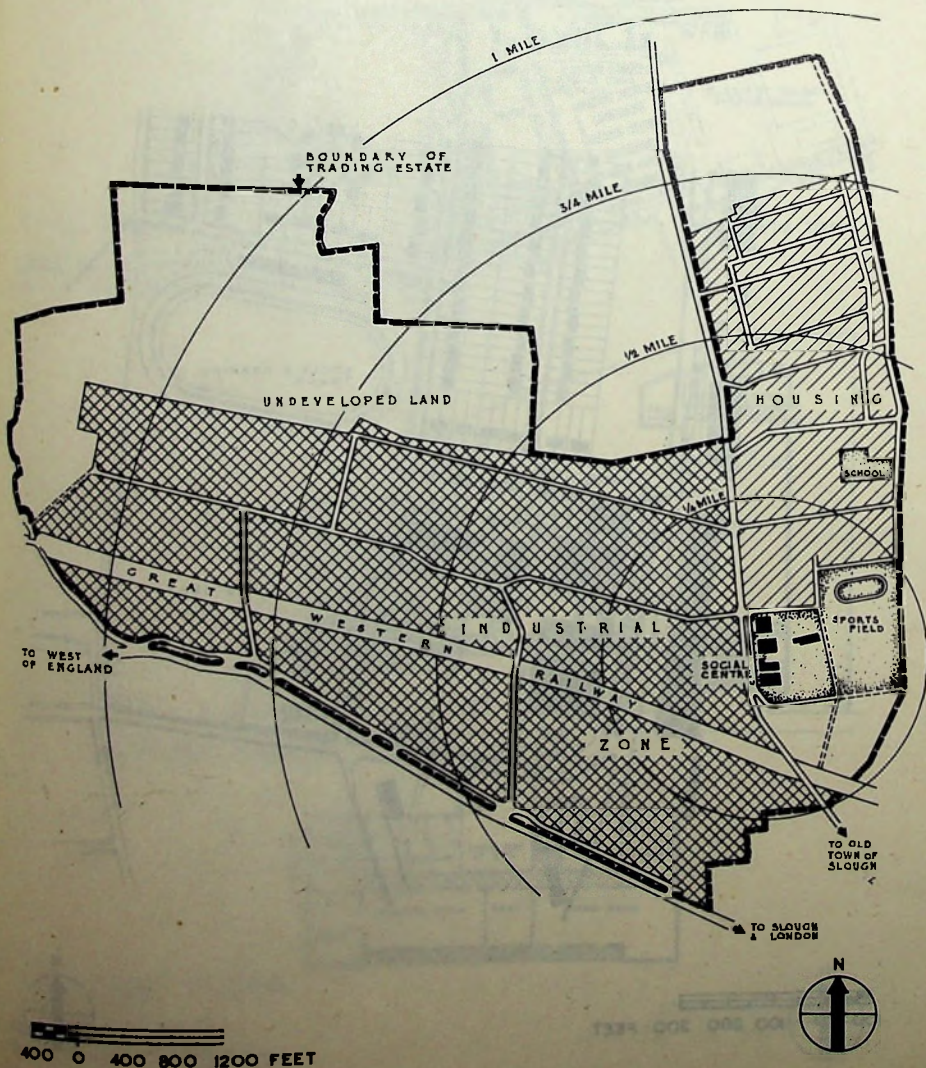
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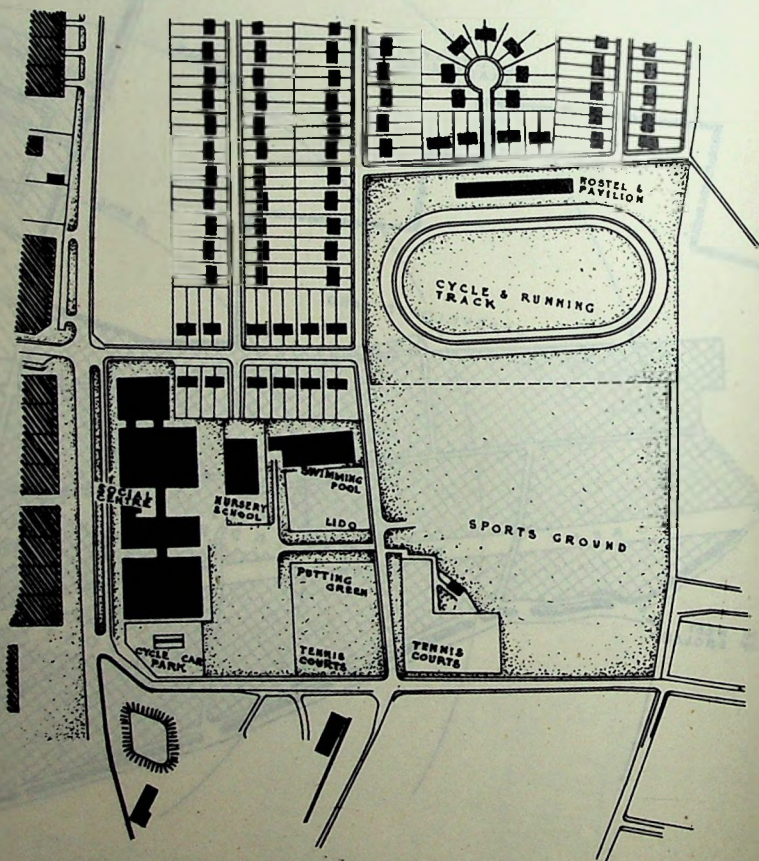




# SLOUGH TRADING ESTATE SLOUGH, BUCKS



6  
SLOUGH SOCIAL CENTRE  
TRADING ESTATE  
SLOUGH, BUCKS

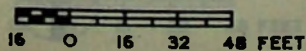
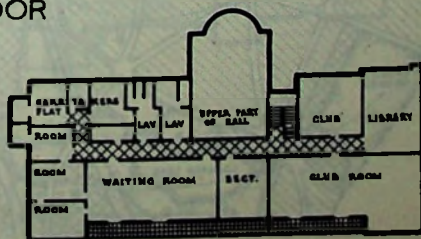
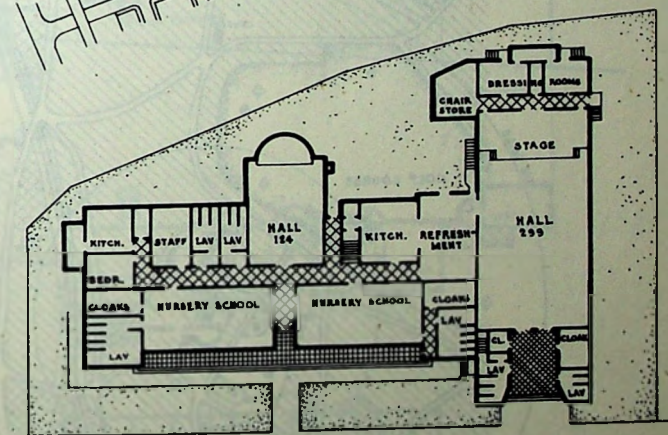
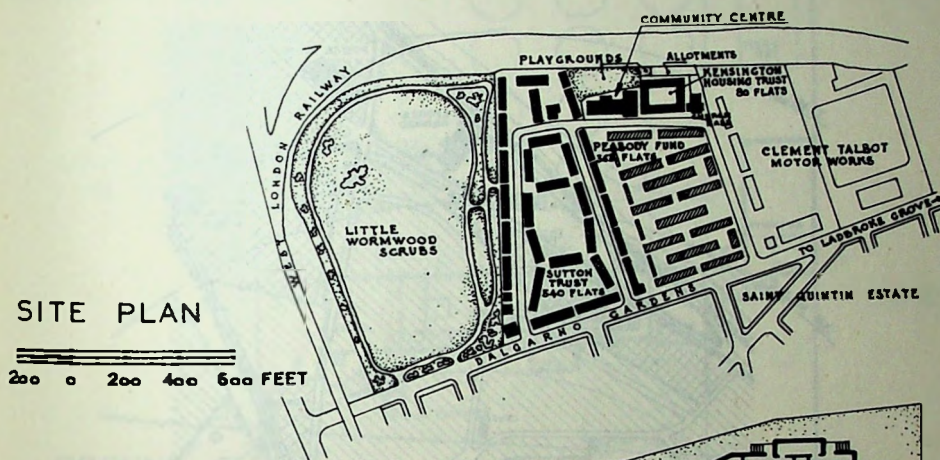


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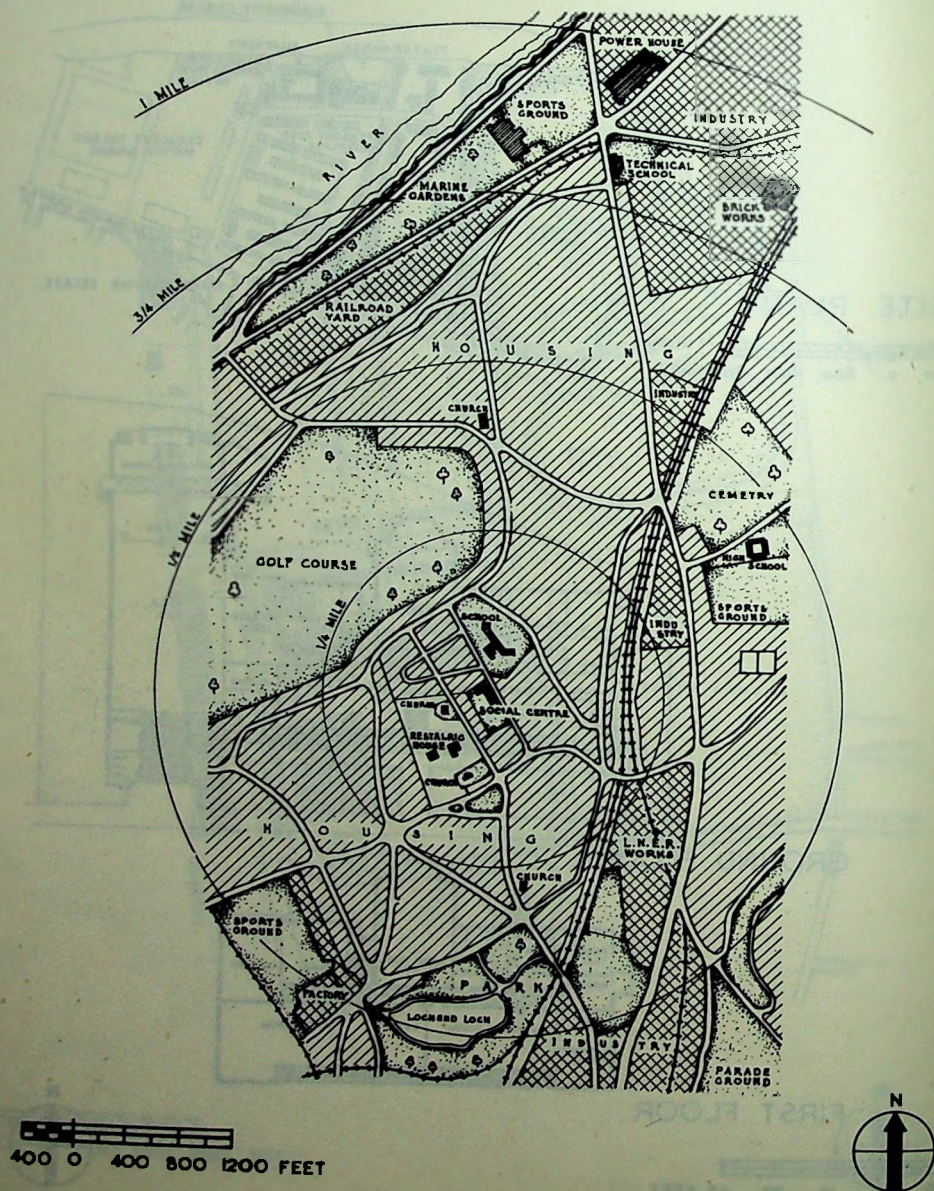


COMMUNITY CENTRE, DALGARN GARDENS  
NORTH KENSINGTON.



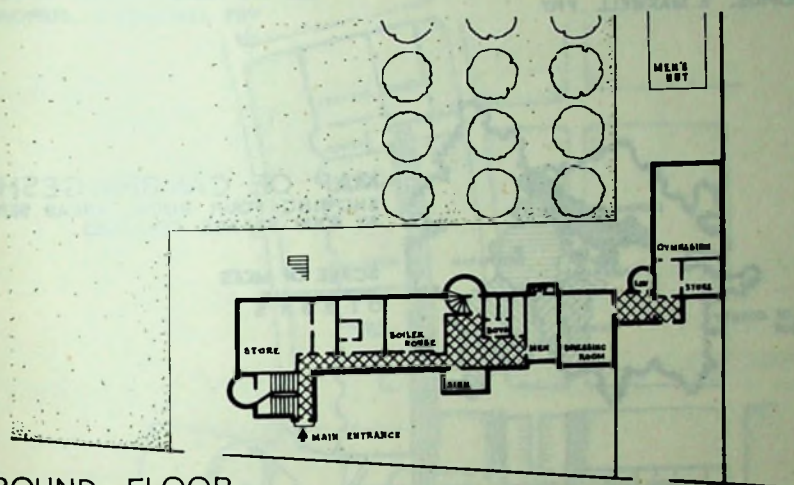


# 8 CRAIGENTINNY-LOCHEND SOCIAL CENTRE EDINBURGH

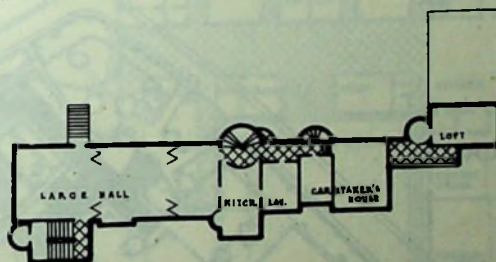




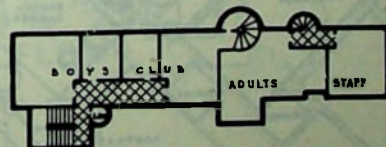
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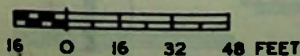
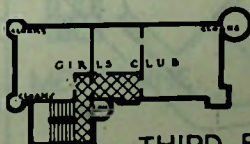
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SECOND FLOOR



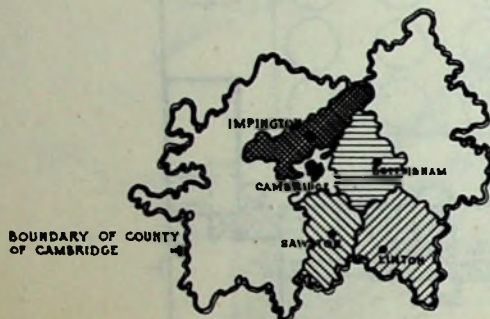
THIRD FLOOR



10

# IMPINGTON VILLAGE COLLEGE CAMBRIDGESHIRE

BY W. GROPIUS, E. MAXWELL FRY

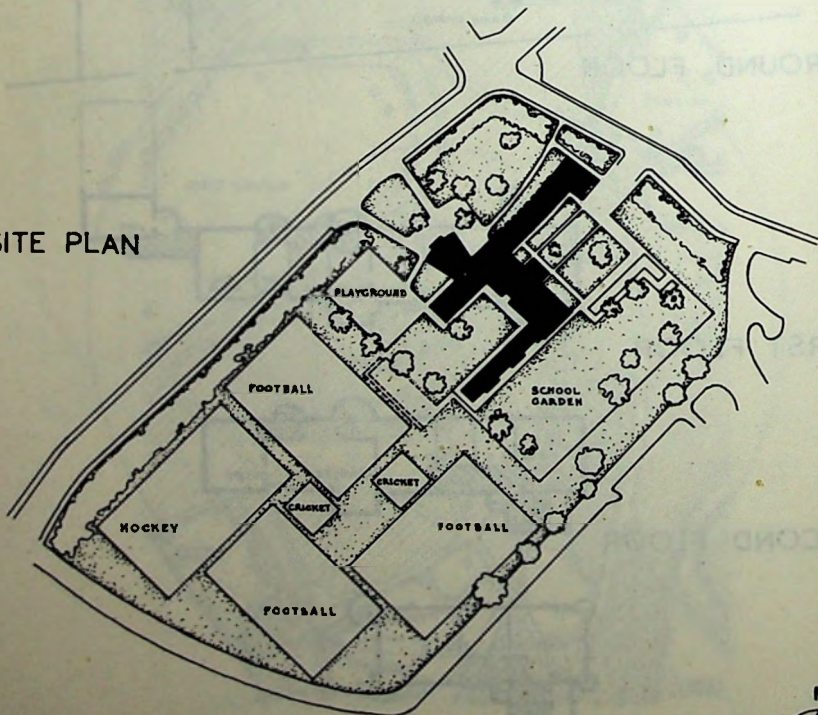


MAP OF CAMBRIDGESHIRE  
SHOWING FOUR RURAL AREAS SERVED  
BY FOUR VILLAGE COLLEGES.

SCALE OF MILES

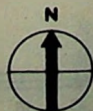
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SITE PLAN



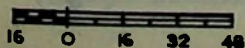
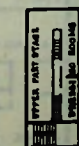
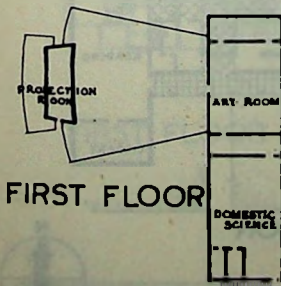
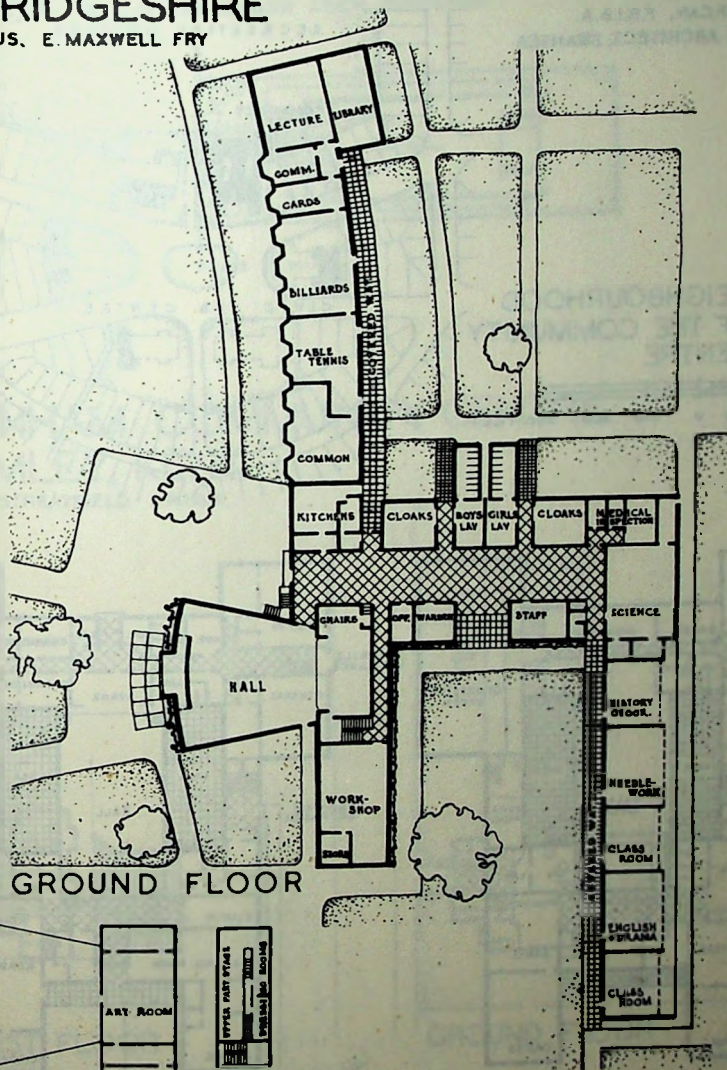
SCALE TO SITE PLAN.

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IMPINGTON VILLAGE COLLEGE  
CAMBRIDGESHIRE



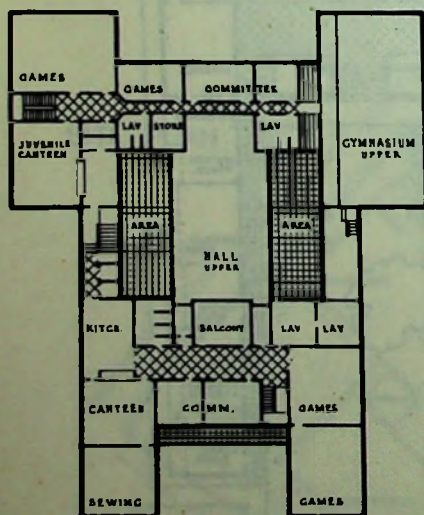
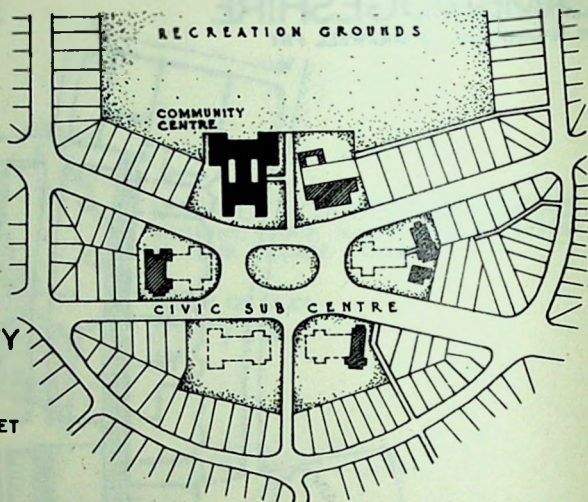
12

# TOWN HILL COMMUNITY CENTRE SWANSEA

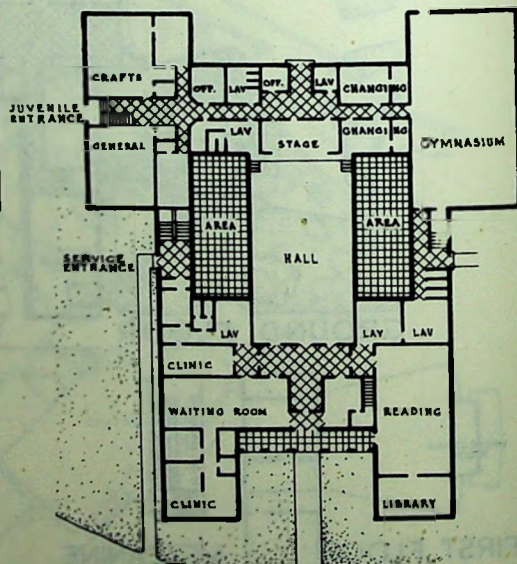
BY E.E.MORGAN, F.R.I.B.A.  
BOROUGH ARCHITECT, SWANSEA

NEIGHBOURHOOD  
OF THE COMMUNITY  
CENTRE

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FIRST FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR

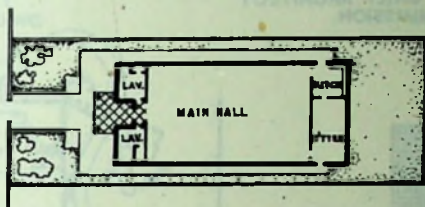
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# WERRINGTON & DISTRICT VILLAGE HALL STAFFS.

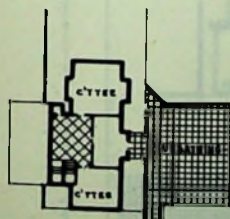
BY T. JERVIS MADEW ARCH. SURVEYOR



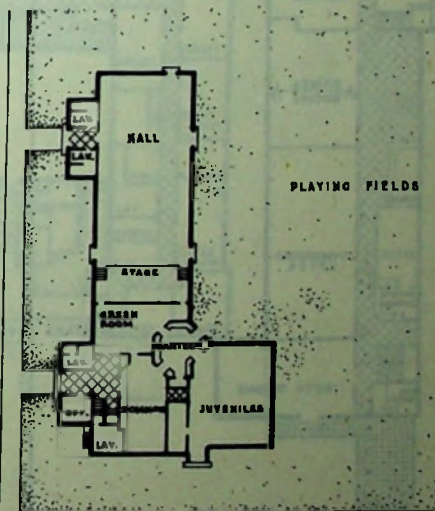
SCALE AS BELOW.

## DOWNHAM COMMUNITY CENTRE BROMLEY, KENT

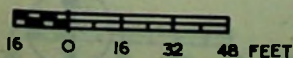
BY C.E.S. STREATFIELD F.R.I.B.A.



FIRST FLOOR



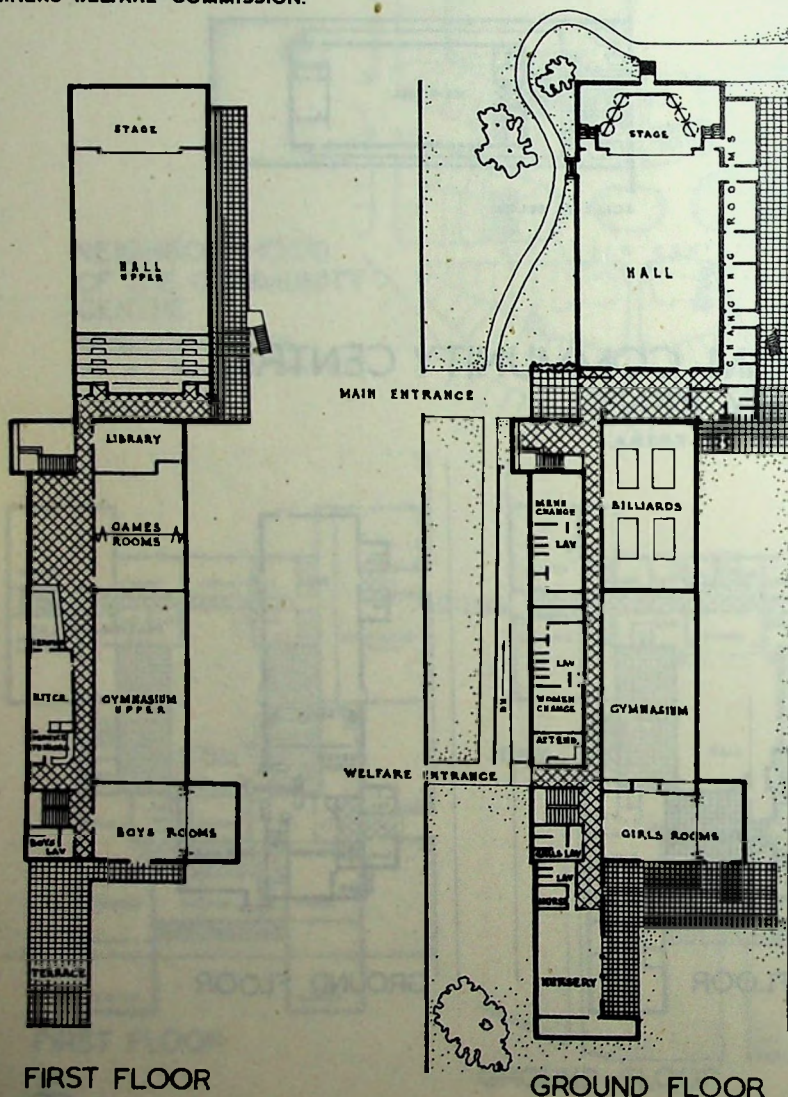
GROUND FLOOR



14

# MINERS WELFARE COMMUNITY CENTRE, KELLS, CUMBERLAND.

BY C.G.KEMP ACTING CHIEF ARCHITECT  
MINERS WELFARE COMMISSION.



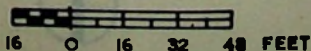
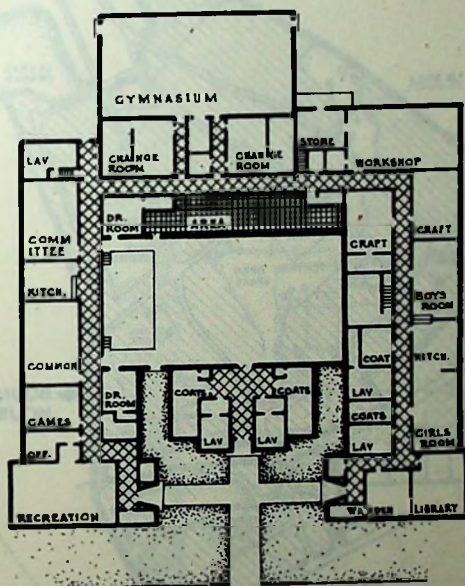
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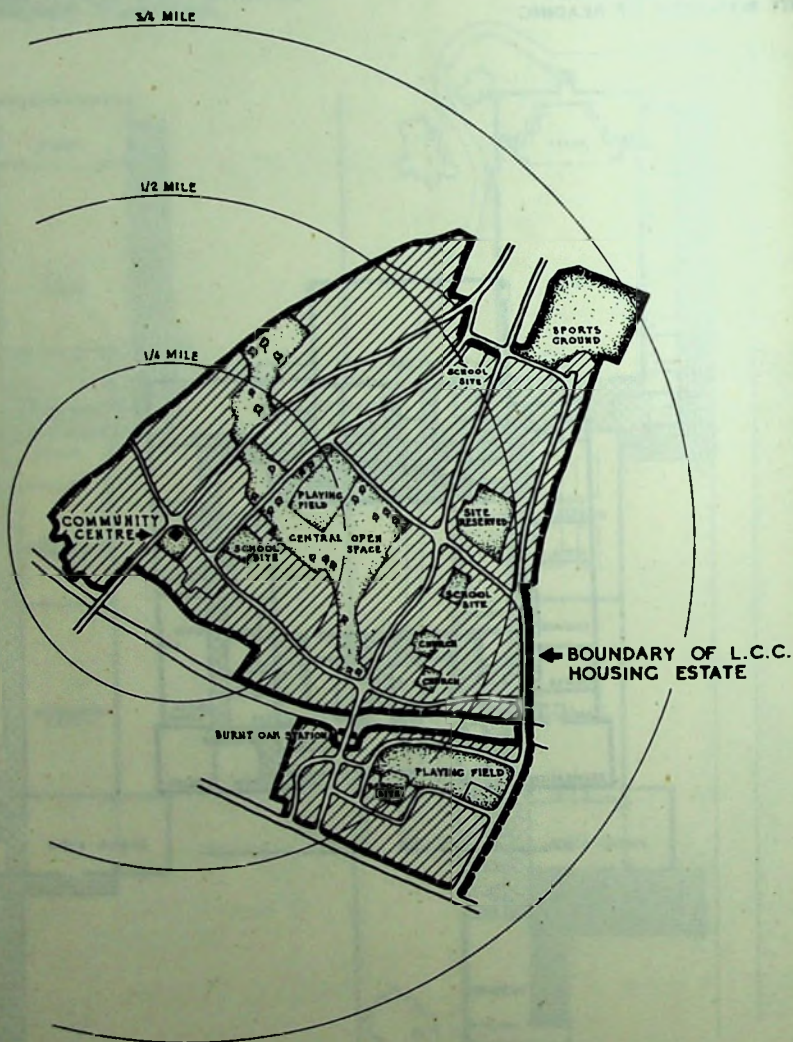
SOUTH READING COMMUNITY CENTRE  
READING

BY THE HOUSING ARCHITECT  
COUNTY BOROUGH OF READING



16

# WATLING ESTATE, EDGWARE



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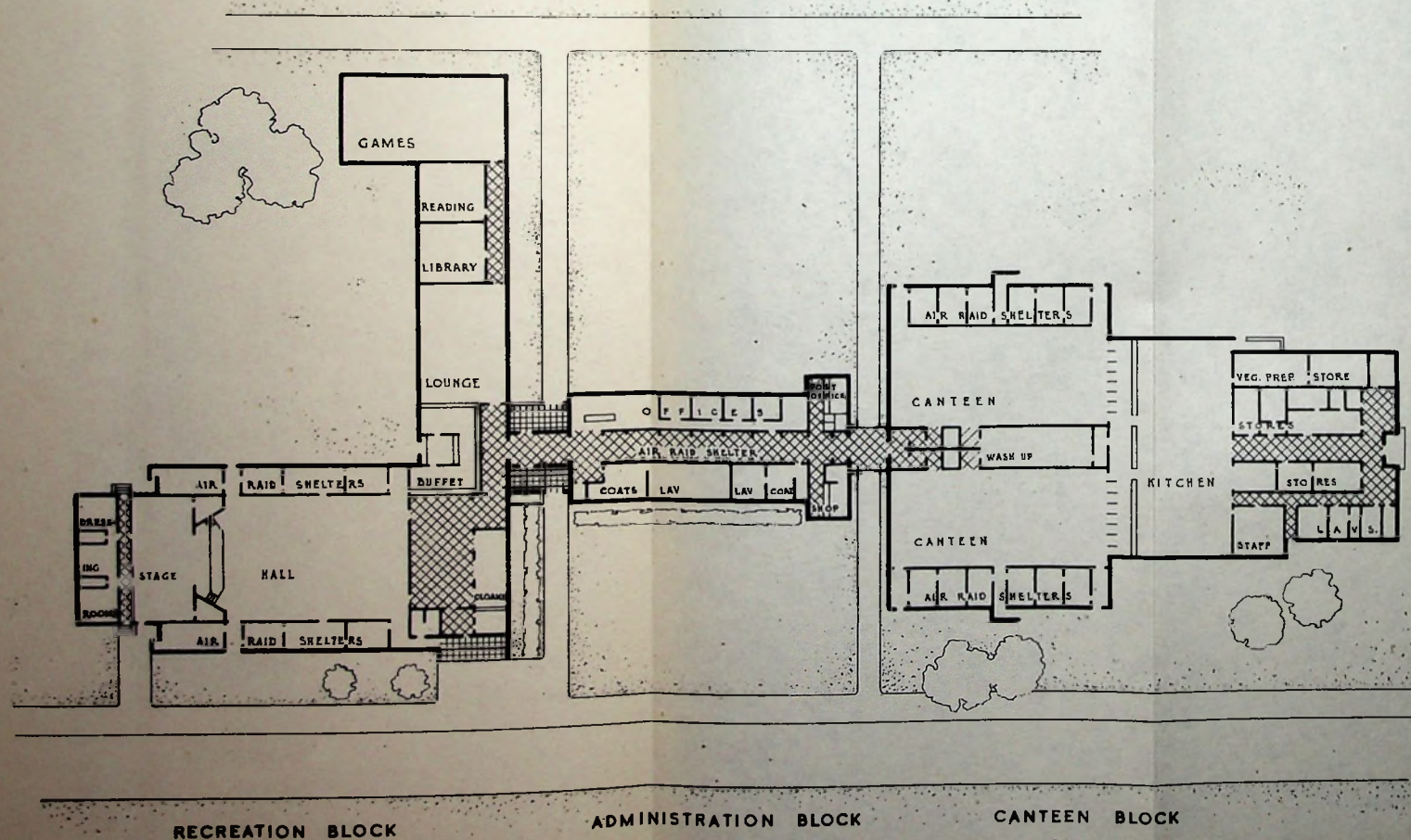


# COMMUNITY CENTRE FOR WAR WORKERS CENTRAL BUILDING IN HOSTEL FOR A 1,000 WORKERS.

BY W.C. HOLFORD, A.R.I.B.A., M.T.P.I.,

CHIEF ARCHITECT - HOSTELS

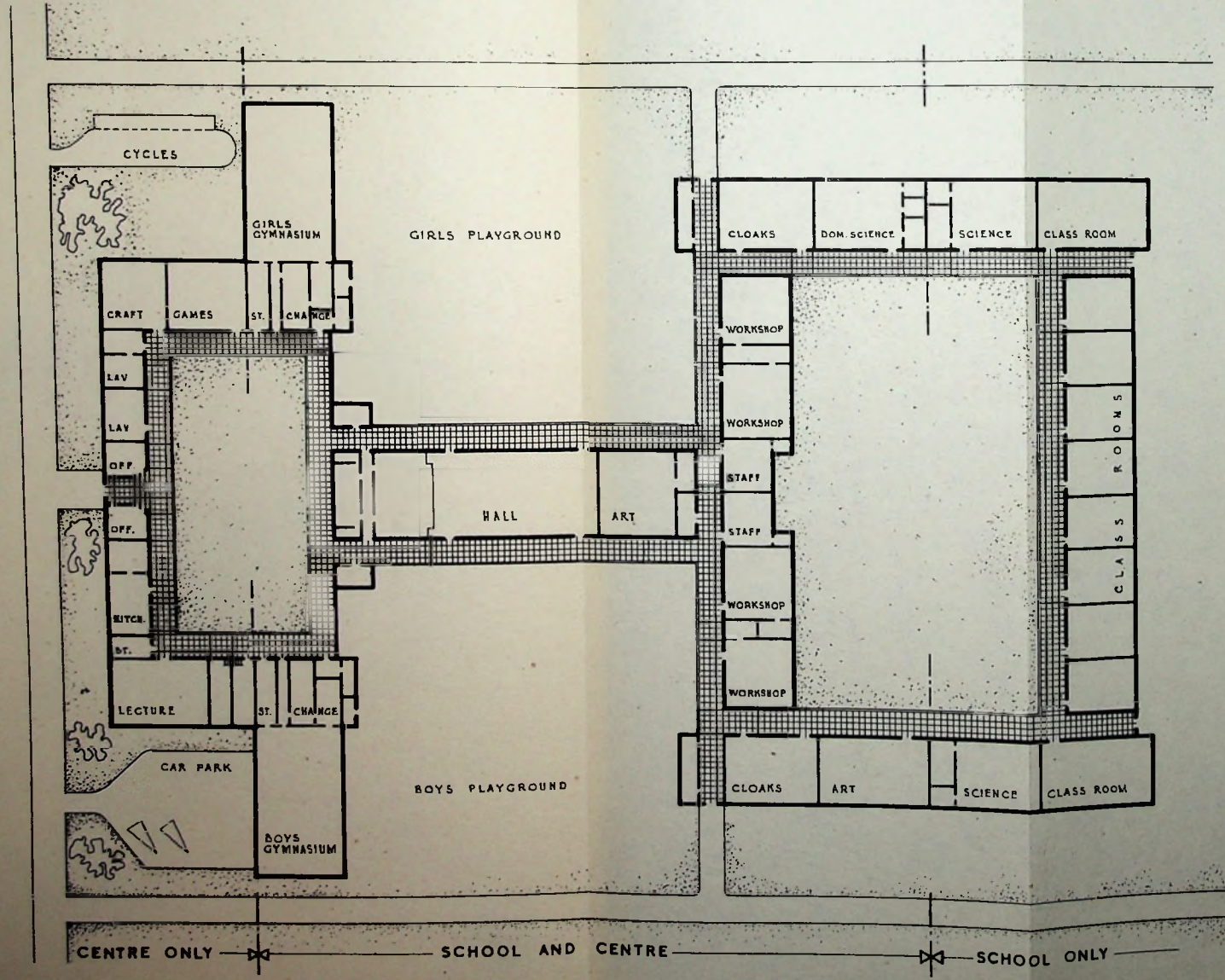
SIR ALEXANDER GIBB & PARTNERS





# NUNSTHORPE COUNCIL SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY CENTRE, GRIMSBY

BY C. H. TURNER, A.I.A.A.

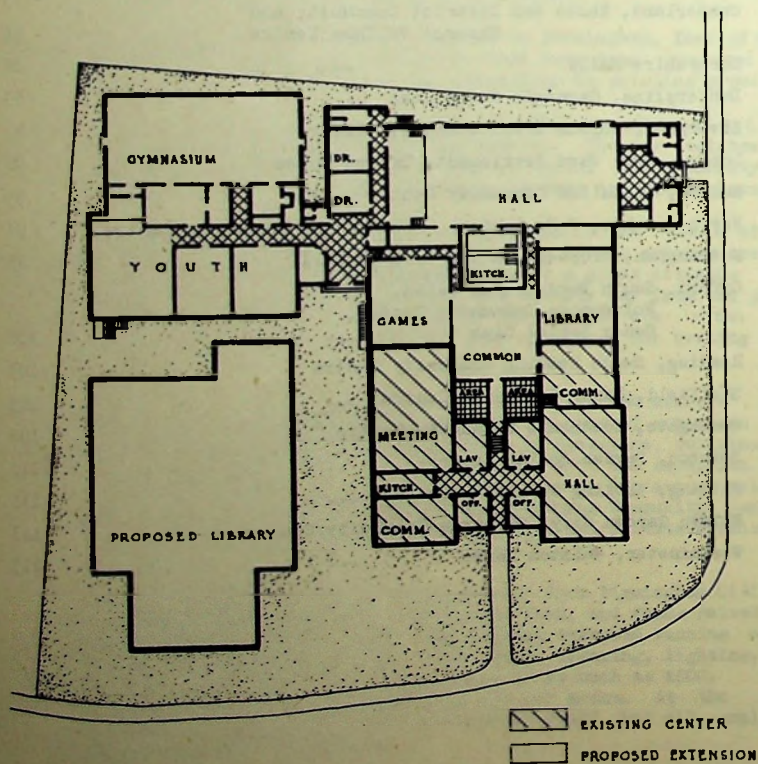


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# WATLING COMMUNITY CENTRE EDGWARE

BY C.E.S. STREATFIELD, F.R.I.B.A.



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## COMMUNITY CENTRES, BIRMINGHAM

The Birmingham Council for Community Associations was formed in 1930 and is composed of voluntary organisations interested in the social life on the new housing estates, together with certain departments of the Local Authority such as the Education Department, the Estates Department, Public Works Department, etc. The Council meets three times a year and its Executive Committee meets each month. It is financed by a £400 grant from the local Education Committee, other grants, and a subscription list.

The aim of the Council is to promote Community Associations and to assist in the building of Community Centres. In addition to helping with advice, grant aid, and clerical assistance, the Council undertakes occasional social surveys. In the past ten years the Council has raised over £36,000.

There are at present eleven Community Centres in Birmingham, four of which possess their own playing fields. Six building sites have been reserved by the Local Authority, two of which will be for extensions to existing premises.

The total population of Birmingham is over one million persons and of these approximately 200,000 live on new housing estates. The new estates in Birmingham, as elsewhere, have suffered from lack of social and community facilities. It is to meet these needs that Community Centres are being planned.

The majority of the Birmingham Centres are situated in the heart of the housing estates which they are designed to serve. Some of the estates are so large, however, that the Centres must necessarily be at a great distance from parts of the estate. The estates in their turn are usually far from the places where residents find their work and the result is that people are often too tired from travelling to and from work to have time or energy for evening activities at their Centres.

The Birmingham Centres have, in the past, mainly attracted members over twenty-five years of age. The young people between the ages of seventeen and twenty-five did not attend the Centres a great deal in peacetime, but since the war have found them more attractive. All the Centres, with the exception of two, cater for residents of the Corporation housing estates who are of relatively the same income groups. One of the exceptions, Harborne Community Centre, draws members from both the new housing estates and the old private residential area nearby.

The Centres are financed mainly by subscriptions from Birmingham Citizens, Civic Trusts, membership subscriptions, affiliation fees, and funds raised by the Centres through socials, dances, etc. The average overhead running costs range from £250, which is made up of rent, half rates, cleaning, lighting, heating, and caretaking. Some have total expenditures of as much as £800. The customary individual membership subscription is 1/- per annum. At the time of our visit none of the Centres had paid secretarial staff, but all employed caretakers on a full or half-time basis.

Executive control of the Centres is in the hands of their Councils which are elected at an annual meeting. They are usually composed of two representatives per organisation, independent members of the general public, and certain co-opted members. The Council elects the usual officers and an Executive Committee. In addition, various sub-committees are appointed to deal with finance, social activities, canteens, sports, etc.

The local Community Associations meet by-monthly under the leadership of the Federation of Community Associations. The Federation organises inter-Association annual sports competitions and an annual drama festival. It is responsible for a successful summer bungalow Camp in North Wales.

Since the outbreak of war, the Birmingham Council for Community Associations has not only erected and occupied a new Community Centre at Lea Hall, but has acquired and opened a large private house on the Dads Lane Estate, which has been taken over by the Dads Lane Community Association.

Other war-time activities of the Council include aid to the Local Associations in promoting First Aid Classes, Citizens' Advice Bureaux, Cookery Demonstrations, etc., publicity work for the Ministry of Labour and National Service in connection with transferred industrial workers, and surveys to establish the need for communal meals in certain areas.

1. Allen's Cross :

This Centre was built in 1931 on a new estate of 2,161 houses. It is of brick construction and contains a large hall and stage, two committee rooms, and the usual lavatory accommodation. At the rear of the Community Centre there is a grass tennis court, a small bowling green, and an outside hut. Nearby is a sports field and pavilion which was opened in 1938. The Association is planning to have a new Club House containing a games room and office. It is to cost about £1,000, part of which has already been raised. Applications had been made to the National Fitness Council, but the scheme has now been postponed owing to the War.

2. Billesley Old Hall :

The building was put up in 1935 of corrugated iron sheeting on a timber frame. The estate on which it is located has 3,417 houses. A grant was made from the Lord Mayor's Unemployed Relief Fund to move this old hall from another location and fix it up for its present purpose. It contains a main hall with a platform, two very small committee rooms, and another medium-sized room. The Centre has no recreational facilities of its own but has easy access to the Common at the rear and to a park opposite.

3. Billesley New Hall :

The Corporation erected the New Hall in 1936 on an estate of 3,417 houses at a cost of £5,855. It contains a main hall and stage, kitchen, two committee rooms, lavatories and cloakrooms. There are no recreational facilities connected with the New Hall, although some are available in a Park some distance away. The Local Authority was considering extensions in the form of a common room, games room, etc.

4. Glebe Farm :

This Community Hall was built in 1935 on an estate of 1,335 houses. The Hall contains an Assembly Hall with platform, one committee room, canteen, and lavatories. Extensions were planned at a cost of £4,800 to include a main hall, a multi-purpose room, two committee rooms, a canteen, and lavatories. The scheme has been postponed owing to the war. There is a small recreation ground near the Centre.



5. Harborne Community Centre :

This Centre is housed in a reconditioned golf house of brick construction in the bungalow style. It was re-opened in 1938 and is situated on a Corporation estate of approximately 1,500 houses. There are also several thousand privately-built houses nearby. The accommodation consists of the main hall, two committee rooms, games room, library, common room, canteen, secretary's office, and lavatories and cloakrooms. A request has been made to the Local Authority for land nearby for recreational purposes. Before the war the Centre was planning to seek the assistance of the National Fitness Council in establishing a new extension in the form of a large hall for gymnasium and social purposes, stage, and necessary changing rooms and lavatories. The cost of the present building was about £1,000 and the cost of alterations also came to approximately £1,000.

6. Kettlehouse Community Centre :

Is a wooden pavilion erected in 1935 on a corporation estate of 1,500 houses. It contains a social room, billiard room, canteen, and lavatories. There are good recreational facilities attached to the pavilion which include football pitches, cricket pitches, tennis courts, putting greens, etc.

7. Kingstanding Community Centre :

Was built in 1933 and stage extensions were added in 1937. It is on a corporation estate of 4,802 houses and there are several thousand privately built houses in the neighbourhood. The Centre includes a main hall and stage, four small committee rooms, canteen and lavatory accommodation. A scheme for building a gymnasium at a cost of £2,300 with aid from the National Fitness Council has been postponed by the war. Until the beginning of the war there was a full-time Organising Secretary.

8. Lea Hall Community Centre :

Until recently the headquarters of this Centre were in a council house of the four-bedroom, parlour type. The Corporation estate on which it is located has 5,000 houses. The Association has a site of 1.25 acres reserved by the Public Works Department and hopes to erect a permanent Centre on it in the future. An alternative site has also been reserved and has better recreational facilities near it. Early in 1940 two timber huts were erected on the first site with stage and connecting lavatories and canteen at a cost of £1,000.

9. Perry Common :

Had an Occupational Centre in a small brick building which contains a billiard room and craft room. It has now been turned into a Youth Centre. There is also a timber Community Centre hut which contains one room and a lavatory, and an office hut of one room. There is a children's playground opposite but no other recreational facilities. A site for a future Centre has been reserved on a nearby estate.

10. Weoley Castle Community Centre :

Was built in 1934 on a Corporation estate of 2,718 houses. It includes a main hall and stage, two medium meeting rooms, a common room, office and library

combined, canteen, and lavatories. At the Centre there is a tennis court and a bowling green and there is a sports field nearby. Next to the Centre there are a nursery school and a Boys' and Girls' Club.

#### 11. West Heath Community Centre :

Is a timber building in a neighbourhood of several thousand houses built by private enterprise. It contains a main room, committee room, lavatory, and outside hut used for Boys' Club. There is also a recently erected Hut containing a large room, small canteen, and lavatory. The Association plans to build permanently after the war. The Community Centre Hut is situated on the Association's sportsfield.

#### SWAINE HOUSE AND DISTRICT COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION, BRADFORD

The Community Association has not yet been able to secure a building of its own for a Centre and is using a school in the evenings and at week-ends. There are few cases where school and Community Centre activities have been combined in one building with any great success, and it is interesting to note the way in which this Association is meeting and overcoming its difficulties. It owes its origin to a member of the Bradford Town Council who is interested in the Community Centres movement and who approached a few people in the neighbourhood to find out their ideas on the subject. Circulars were sent to residents on the housing estate where the Centre now flourishes, and a meeting was called in June, 1938. Only 20 persons attended, but a committee was appointed to organise a social for September, 1938. Three hundred persons attended the social and conference, heard talks by the Town Councillor and by the Regional Officer of the National Council of Social Service. The event was a success.

Arrangements were made to rent rooms in the local elementary school at a nominal fee. Social activities were planned and money was raised for the building fund and other more immediate necessities. The Association became affiliated with the National Council of Social Service in April, 1939. The Town Councillor dropped out of the Association as soon as it was well established.

#### 1. Situation :

The school which is used by the Association is in the heart of a new Council housing estate, about ten minutes' bus ride from the centre of Bradford. The school has an ample and pleasant site with large playing field behind it. Unfortunately, the Playing Fields Association, who are the owners, allow their field to be used only by children under supervision, which means it is closed except during school hours and terms. There is no other playing field on the estate, and the Community Association was planning to approach the Town Council on this subject. There is a two-acre site nearby which would be suitable for a Community Centre building at a later date, and which could be used by the children for a playing field in the meantime.

#### 2. The Centre and the Community :

There are 800 houses on the Estate, but the Centre includes about 200 more private houses in the district under its sphere of action. Membership at present is based on regular attendances and comes to about 200. Until the Association have their own building they do not plan to start a scheme of membership subscriptions.



The Honorary Secretary of the Community Association and other members of the Executive Committee feel quite genuinely that there is no psychological difficulty where the building is concerned and that people are not opposed to a school building merely because it is a school. They admit that the character of the building may have something to do with this feeling. It has only one storey and is planned around two open courtyards. There are many windows to make it airy and sunny and the whole atmosphere is undoubtedly far removed from what most adults remember as the typical, old-fashioned school.

However, the Committee admits that there are certain difficulties to be overcome, such as friction between those in charge of the school and those who run the Community Association. The former feel that their territory is being usurped by outsiders and that it may even be damaged. The latter feel poignantly the lack of any headquarters sacred to their use only.

#### Activities :

In spite of these clouds on the horizon, the Association carries on vigorously with a full programme of activities, including socials and whist drives, dances, dancing classes of several kinds, keep fit classes, ladies' nights, horticultural society, swimming club, cycling club, children's carnivals, &c.

#### 3. Planning :

Before the war started, the Association used three class-rooms and two halls (nursery school playrooms in the daytime). Black-out was a great problem, involving as it did such large expanses of window. The Association attempted to carry on with afternoon meetings only. This soon proved unsuccessful and one hall and one classroom were properly blacked out. The programme was considerably cut. The Community Association pays for each room individually as and when they use it.

Although the character of the school is pleasant and therefore recommends the rooms to the adults who use them, the physical accommodation cannot be considered as ideal. Circulation between rooms is by an open passageway around the interior courtyards. The nursery school playrooms which are used by the Association for large functions are not equipped with adequate stage facilities. The Association uses a platform at one end for a stage and has a set of temporary curtains which can be drawn across.

Storage is another of the Association's problems. Some of their property can be stored at the school, but limited space means that they must carry things to and from their homes. An extra fee for the use of a piano and for hot water are other annoying details.

In spite of the difficulties facing this young Community Association, their spirit is strong. Discussion with members of their Executive Committee leaves the feeling that, war or no war, they will manage to keep the important nucleus of the organisation in being and will be ready, at the earliest possible moment, to secure headquarters of their own.

## DOWNHAM COMMUNITY CENTRE, BROMLEY, KENT

The Downham Community Association held their first meetings in a timber hut. In 1934 they were able to build the first section of their present Centre, and in 1936 the building was completed. No aid was received for the building from the Government. A small sum of money was raised by the Community Association, but the bulk of the cost was met by two grants from the London Parochial Charities totalling £3800.

Although the Centre is technically in the Borough of Bromley, that community exhibits little interest in it. The estate on which the Centre is located is unpopular in Bromley. So much so that residents of a private building development which adjoins the housing estate saw fit to erect a wall across the street which ran through the estate and into the more sacrosanct territory of the jerry builder. Erected hastily in one night, this barrier is known locally as "The Wailing Wall" and is symbolic of the unhappy relationship between the newcomers and the older residents. The Community Centre can obviously expect little support or co-operation from local people who live off the London County Council Housing Estate.

### 1. Situation :

The Community Centre is at the extreme edge of the same London County Council estate on which the Goldsmiths' Centre is located. It is at the end of the street terminated by "The Wailing Wall" as well as at the foot of a hill. There is a forlorn atmosphere about the site.

There is a Boys' Club next to the Centre and playing fields at the rear. The playing fields were partially laid out by voluntary labour from the estate under the auspices of the Community Association who held a 21-years' lease on the ground. Later the Association found that it was having too much difficulty in maintaining the grounds and turned them over to the L.C.C. who spent £2,000 on improving the playing field. Four tennis courts and a net-ball pitch are included.

### 2. The Centre and the Community :

Between the beginning of the War and March, 1941, the membership dropped from 1,000 to 250.

The Honorary Secretary, Mr. Condon, is now a taxi-driver, but was once a physical training instructor in the Army. His genial personality and ability as a trainer have undoubtedly been responsible for the popularity of the Centre among the young men and boys.

The Boys' Club has its own building towards which the London Parochial Charities gave £1,000 and is associated with but independent of the Community Centre. Cricket, boxing, and indoor games such as darts and table tennis are popular. A week's summer camp for members was a special peacetime activity.



The Girls' Club meets at the Centre. Dancing and physical culture are the chief activities. There is also an Unemployed Men's Club associated with the Centre but with premises of its own on another part of the estate.

The educational activities are organised with the help of the Kent Educational Committee and the South Suburban Co-operative Society. Classes in physical training are very successful, but dressmaking, elocution, and drama meet with greater troubles. The social section has a special committee which organises drives, socials, jumbles, and other parties.

There is a free Legal Advice Bureau at the Centre and a clinic where massage, sun-ray, and infra-red ray treatment may be obtained. The Community Association pays trained masseurs and operators at regular rates for giving the treatment. Since the war, one of the rooms at the Centre has been used for a Citizens' Advice Bureau.

### 3. Planning :

Accommodation consists of an Assembly Hall with stage and green room, a Common Room, a Juvenile Room and a Canteen on the ground floor. On the first floor there are two club or committee rooms and the room used for the clinic.

The Hall seats about 350 persons. There is a separate entrance on the main facade of the building, but it is not at the end of the room but on one of the long sides about three quarters of the distance from the stage to the back of the room. There are male and female lavatories and cloakrooms adjoining this entrance, but they are quite inadequate for the size of the Hall. There is no chair store provided.

The permanent stage is small but it can be extended at the sides. The green room behind the stage can be divided by a sliding and folding partition when it is used for dressing-rooms. If it is so divided the remainder of the Centre and the canteen in particular are cut off from the hall. There is no way of reaching the hall from the Centre except by going through the green room which is an extremely inconvenient arrangement.

Plays, dances and badminton and boxing tournaments are held in the hall. The floor is laid the short way of the room which makes it more suitable for physical training than for dancing. It is very popular for dances none the less.

The Common Room is in a good position just opposite the main door of the Centre. It has a large fire-place and is a comfortable and attractive rendezvous. The full-size billiard-table which occupies most of the central floor space turns it into a games room in reality.

The Juvenile Room is at the rear of the building. There are showers and lavatories connected to it and a separate outdoor entrance. There is no way of reaching it from the interior of the Centre, however, without going through the Common Room. There is space for two boxing rings and fittings for attaching punching bags.

The Canteen is cleverly placed in a corner where it can serve through four hatches into different parts of the building. There are service hatches to the Juvenile Room, the Common Room, the Green Room (for the large hall), and

outside to the rear garden. Although it is small and curiously shaped, the canteen is reported to work very effectively. It has good cupboards and plenty of counter space.

There is a small office at one side of the front entrance and a men's lavatory at the other. It is a good point that instead of balancing the men's and women's lavatories neatly on either side of the entrance and then tucking the office away in a dark corner, the women's lavatory has been given the privacy of an entrance from the half-landing and the office given the good position.

The committee rooms on the first floor are a good size and adequate for their purpose. The clinic is in a south-facing room at the rear of the Centre and makes use of the flat roof over the Juvenile Room for sunbathing. The Citizen's Advice Bureau is using one of the committee rooms. The other is a larger room with an opening down on to the stage. The original idea was that this would be used for a craft room, and scenery which was made here would be easily shifted to the stage below.

Plans exist for adding a gymnasium to the Centre at some future date. Changing-room, showers, instructor's room, equipment store, and boiler and fuel rooms are included in the extensions. The gymnasium is to run at right angles to the large hall and to be entered from the Centre through a door in the rear wall of the hall. There is an entrance to the gymnasium from outside the building, but no other means of reaching it except through the green room and hall.

The chief criticism of the Downham Centre is that, although the rooms are well shaped and adequate in themselves, they are badly arranged in relation to one another. Going through one room to reach some other is always confusing and cuts down the efficiency of the room which becomes a passageway. The limitations imposed on the plan by the shallow depth of the site no doubt account for these facts.

#### 4. Construction, Finishes, Equipment :

The building is of brick and timber construction, exterior walls are finished in a grey pebbledash except for the main entrance, the hall entrance, and the piers of the hall which are in brick. Interior walls are finished in plaster and are painted clean bright colours. Floors are of wood boards and covered with linoleum except the large hall which is maple, and the lavatories which are tiled. The roof is of timber covered with felt and tiles.

There is little in the way of "furnishing". Simple wooden tables and chairs in the common room and committee rooms make no pretences at being decorative. Folding wooden chairs are used in the hall and stacked at one end when not in use.

#### VILLAGE HALLS, CAERNARVONSHIRE

In North Wales the village or parish hall is often the centre of cultural and social life for the community. The people are intellectually inquisitive, actively interested in current affairs, and very keen on adult education. The Workers' Educational Association is active and many halls owe their origin to W.E.A. classes. The Welsh are famous for their dramatic and musical ability,



and the local hall consequently assumes an important place in the community.

Eisteddfods are held annually and Noson Lawens (Jolly or Happy Evenings) more frequently. The audience, particularly for the Eisteddfods, is drawn from a much wider area than the village itself. Consequently, the capacity of a hall must be much larger than the requirements of the village alone would warrant.

Dancing and modern jazz are not popular in Caernarvonshire, but whist drives are a regular part of village hall programmes.

The Mynytho Village Institute :

(a) Situation :

The Institute is in a village whose population of 400 is scattered over a wide area. It is situated in the most central part of the village, next to the school. The site is a generous one with open green fields around it and a fine view.

(b) The Institute and the Community :

There are numerous farms in the neighbourhood of the village, but they are not sizeable enough to absorb the local labour supply. Most of the village men are builders' labourers and work on council housing and sea-side resorts. Those who do find work as farm labourers have to receive a family allowance because of their low wage rate.

The Institute was built six years ago at a cost of £1,500. It was hoped to spend another £300 in additions and improvements, but the Institute has suffered from the competition of cinemas and other amusements. The average yearly membership is about 100 persons, nearly all men. (Probably because of the popularity of the billiards room.)

W.E.A. Classes are held at the Institute and had 30 members at the time of our visit. Drama is popular and during the winter there are usually six or seven dramatic shows. Other activities include a Women's Institute Branch, the Toc H, Welsh League of Youth, Keep Fit Classes, Annual Sports, Annual Horticultural and Agricultural Show, and a male voice choir.

(c) Planning :

The Institute includes a Hall, stage, Kitchen, Billiard Room and lavatory accommodation. The Billiard Room is on the first floor over the entrance.

(d) Construction :

The building is constructed of large granite blocks and has a timber roof covered with grey slates. There are deal board floors and window frames are of wood.

Rhosgadfan Village Institutes:

The Institute and the Community :

The Hall is in the centre of a village with a population of 800 persons.

The Hall comes from a nucleus of W.E.A. classes which were formerly held in the local school. A large percentage of men in the neighbourhood were unemployed and were able to contribute over 1,500 days of voluntary labour to the construction of the Hall. Other local people worked at weekends and also contributed money, materials and equipment. Total contributions towards the building costs were :

Carnegie Trust Grant	...	...	£130. 0. 0
Pilgrim Trust Grant	...	...	£160. 0. 0
Individuals	...	...	£ 80. 0. 0
Sir Harold Werner's Charitable Trust			£ 50. 0. 0

Membership of the Institute is about 100, with a fairly even proportion of men and women. Sewing and singing classes are held for the women. About 35 men belong to W.E.A. classes. Drama and concerts are among the popular activities.

#### Planning :

The plan of the Institute is very simple, consisting as it does of only a hall, stage, and two committee rooms behind.

### COMMUNITY CENTRES, CANNOCK CHASE REGION

The Cannock Chase area, one in which there is a great need for social and cultural facilities, has been "adopted" by the Air Ministry Social Services Association, and receives aid for social work, especially among the unemployed. In the years before the war £5,000 per annum was raised for work in this area, the funds being obtained by contributions from the salaries of employees in the Air Ministry. The Community Centres built under this scheme are done by the Air Ministry's own contractors. Small towns in this part of the country are grouped around collieries and are often isolated from outside amenities and influences. Community Centres will make a tremendous difference to the life of the people by providing a focal point for their leisure time activities.

#### Description of Centres :

##### 1. The Wimblebury Community Centre :

###### (a) Situation :

This Centre is located in a small colliery town, amongst groups of miners' cottages built sometime at the end of the last century. The community was a desolate one, quite on its own, and with no facilities for entertainment or adult education. The coming of the Community Centre has done a great deal for the life of the neighbourhood.

###### (b) The Centre and the Community :

The building is used intensively and there is about the place a "healthy untidiness", which tells of a busy and happy group of members. It is a struggle to make the Centre self-supporting, and at the time of our visit, they were just breaking even financially. The war seems to have affected the drama section and its activities were not continuing. No adult school had been organised.



Dances are extremely popular, the 6d. and 1/- fees of admission are low enough to attract the largest crowds in the region.

Since the war the Centre has housed a mobile ambulance unit and a First Aid Post.

(c) Planning :

The building is small and the accommodation limited. The Assembly Hall which is used for dances, plays and social activities can be divided by sliding and folding partitions to make three small rooms. Apparently these partitions have not been a great success and are not sound-proof. One of the partitions has already been out of commission owing to the sagging of the beam to which it is affixed. At one end of the hall there was originally a platform which was used as a temporary stage. Half of it has been stored away and the remainder put at an angle of 45° in one corner where it can accommodate the dance bands.

The Kitchen is a good-sized room which is not only used for cooking, but as a club room for boys and girls and as a craft room. The heating unit is in one corner of the room with an asbestos-lined partition around it. There is a gas cooker and an Ascot heater for water in the summer.

Some of the local collieries are still without pithead baths and the houses have no bathrooms. Therefore, the Community Centre has a group of baths included which adults may use for 2d., or 1d. if unemployed.

The original Centre was found to be too small and a timber hut has been added next to it with a work-shop and a committee room. The boiler for its central heating unit is in the work-room.

(d) Construction :

The building has a timber frame and walls of Canadian cedar boards. The roof is of timber boards covered with Canadian cedar shingles and supported by timber trusses. Interior walls are lined with plasterboard and ceilings with tented. The Hall has a wood block floor of jara which is not ideal for a dance floor. In the Kitchen, baths and lavatories are tiled. In the extra hut the workshop has a concrete floor which has proved unsuitable. (Tools and delicate instruments are more easily damaged when dropped on a concrete floor than on a wood floor. Lino is also unsuitable because it is too easily cut up by sharp tools.)

The Community Centre was built for £1,650, and the timber hut for £600. The cost of equipment was about £200. A long lease of the site has been secured at One Pound per annum.

2. The Featherstone Community Centre :

(a) The Centre is on a new housing estate, but in a colliery town. Most of its future members will be colliery workers. It has a spacious corner site of nearly an acre.

(b) Planning :

The Featherstone Centre is larger than that at Wimblebury. The Hall is 60' x 30' and seats 350 persons. It is divided by two folding and sliding partitions into three rooms 20' x 30' each. The plan is such that each of these rooms may be reached from the corridor without going through one of the others.

At the end of the Hall there is a good stage with dual changing rooms behind. Sliding and folding partition separates the changing-rooms which are lit by top light through the roof. Behind the dressing-rooms is a spacious craft room. Over the Hall, stage and changing-rooms and craft-rooms there is storage space in the attic reached through a large door in the ceiling of the craft-room. There is also storage room under the changing-room, reached from the craft-room which is a lower level than the rest of the building.

The Kitchen again is a large room and will be used for other female activities than cooking. The facilities have been grouped at one end so that they can be fenced off by a trestle table and the remainder of the room used as a canteen. There is a service pantry between the Hall and the Kitchen, which will help to keep out the noise of Kitchen activities. The Kitchen will also be used for cookery demonstrations.

(c) Construction:

Featherstone is of timber frame construction with exterior walls of Canadian cedar boards and the roof of timber boards covered with Canadian cedar shingles and supported on a timber truss. The building (pre-war contract) cost less than a brick one of similar size. There is little difference between the cost of a shingled and a tiled roof. Interior walls are of  $\frac{5}{8}$ " plasterboard (because it is cheaper than  $\frac{3}{4}$ " matchboarding). The sliding and folding partitions in the Hall have timber frames filled in with an insulating material and covered with hardboard. The floor of the Hall is  $1\frac{1}{2}$ " 'T & G' boarding of maple type and is resilient. The building will be centrally heated, and the interior is to be painted in light and cheerful colours.

CURROCK HOUSE, CARLISLE

Currock House is one of the first five Community Centres to have been established in this country. It owes much to the keen interest of a local business man, who is also Secretary-Treasurer of the Currock Community Association. The building itself would undoubtedly have been torn down when the new housing estate on which it is located was built if it had not been for the work of an influential group of people. Instead, it was retained and renovated about six years ago. The City paid the original cost of £2,400 and part of the cost of additions and alterations, and spent £100 on ground work. A gift of £300 was received for decorating and £200 for the purchase of 300 nesting chairs.

The City Corporation has added an Assembly Hall and Gymnasium combined and a Boys' Club building, and borne the cost of £2,172.

The Centre is used as a Youth Hostel in the summer season, the idea having originated as a purely money-making scheme. The income from the Hostel was £80 to £100 per year which justified the undertaking financially. In practice, the Centre has benefited tremendously from the cosmopolitan atmosphere engendered by visitors from all parts of the country and abroad, and the members have enjoyed the strangers.



## Description of Centre :

### 1. Situation :

Currock House is located on the edge of the estate and adjacent to pleasant open fields. Although it is not centrally situated, it is easily available to local residents because the estate is not large, about 3,000 people in all.

The site of the old house is ample. Gardens have been retained on the western side between the house and the fields. The rear part of the site has been used for the Assembly Hall and the Boys' Club building.

### 2. The Centre and the Community :

About 200 members use the Centre regularly. More men come to Currock House than women. The predominant age group for both sexes is between 20 and 25 years of age. During the first winter of war there was a noticeable increase in the use of the House and membership for young people between the ages of 12 and 16 was increasing. The building is now being used by evacuated schools in the daytime. Judging by the condition of the building inside (after five years) the members have not shown much respect or co-operation in their use of it. Furniture and decorations are in bad condition and members had made no attempt to repair or decorate the rooms themselves.

The Warden and his wife have a self-contained flat on the first floor. Although they find that their work benefits by this arrangement, they work very long hours and undertake many responsibilities which should fall to a caretaker. The first Warden came to Currock House before it was opened as a Centre, and lived on the premises while the building was being altered.

Currock House is governed by the elected council of the Community Association who have affiliated with the National Council of Social Service. A nominal rent is paid to the Corporation for the building. The Education Committee gives an annual grant of £300 toward the expenses of the Centre.

The adults have two rooms on the first floor devoted to their own use. The men play billiards, table tennis, badminton, and have a good football team. The women have their own meetings and sewing classes, etc., and use the Gymnasium on certain days. There is a Boys' Club and a Girls' Club, each with their own room and activities. Both these groups use the Gymnasium at appointed times.

### 3. Planning :

The ground floor of Currock House contains a Library, a small Hall, about 36' x 16', a Kitchen, and two rooms formerly used as the Warden's dining-room and kitchen. On the first floor are the Men's Room, Women's meeting-room, a class-room also used by the Girls' Club, a small committee room, and the Warden's flat.

Few alterations were made at Currock House when it was adapted for use as a community building. On the ground floor the chief change was the removal of a partition so that two rooms could be thrown into one to make a small Hall. A platform stage was placed at one end and a rail for a curtain to screen it. This room was used before the war for table tennis and for small dramatic shows. It is now an A.R.P. Warden's Post and not available to members of the Centre.

The library is well stocked with books provided by the City. The Warden finds voluntary workers to act as librarians and books may be borrowed only during library hours.

The Kitchen is now used as a Canteen and has a counter for the sale of cigarettes and sweets. When meals are served they are prepared in what was formerly the Warden's Kitchen and must be carried through his office.

The first floor class-room is used mainly as an art and craft room. The children are doing interesting work under the direction of the Warden's wife who is a former Art teacher. The Men's Room is open to those over 18 years of age. It contains a billiard-table which is very popular.

The Boys' Club consists of one large room, 30' x 30', and is used for Boy Scout meetings and other boys' organisations. Having one large room for the boys is felt to be more suitable than several smaller ones. In a room of this shape and size all the members of a boys' group can be kept interested at one time and less supervision is necessary.

The Assembly Hall is large enough to seat 350 people and also used as a Gymnasium. It has a good stage with changing-rooms behind. There is a Kitchen behind the stage where refreshments can be prepared for the Hall. The floor has been laid with boards running the short way of the room so that it is suitable for a Gymnasium. To make a floor serve both purposes requires extra cleaning and polishing. The room is used as a gymnasium on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. On Friday large quantities of polish are required to get the floor in shape for dancing. Polish is removed by sweeping the floor with damp sawdust. Showers and lavatories for use in connection with the gymnasium are in a separate building just behind the House and opposite the Boys' Club.

#### KELLS AND DISTRICT COMMUNITY AND MINERS' WELFARE CENTRE, CUMBERLAND

The cost of this scheme, which includes a Community and a Miner's Welfare Institute in one building, was £30,000. The money was provided partly by the Miners' Welfare Fund and partly by the National Fitness Council, which took over a scheme originally sanctioned for grant-aid by the Commissioner for special Areas. The site of the new Centre and the grounds surrounding it are controlled by the Kells Miners' Welfare Committee. A previous Miners' Welfare Institute was burned, and later it was decided to incorporate the new Institute in the Community Centre. The existing sports facilities and grounds have been handed over as a part of the Miners' Welfare contribution. The Centre was opened in 1940.

The new building and the surrounding grounds are vested in Trustees. The Management Committee which is responsible for the Centre represents the mining community, the voluntary organisations of the neighbourhood, and the general public.

##### 1. Situation :

The Centre is in a mining community and is surrounded by a nine-acre recreation ground which includes a full-sized football ground, a cricket-field,



and two bowling greens. Two tennis courts are to be provided later. Adjacent to the football ground and cricket-pitch are dressing-rooms with a terrace in front and stand above for watching games. There is a fine view across the valley to the Lake District mountains.

There is also a children's playground with apparatus. Next to the Boys' and Girls' Room is a concreted roller-skating space and next to the Nursery a games space for small children. The remainder of the grounds are laid out as gardens.

## 2. Planning :

The building includes separate accommodation for Boys, Girls and Adults, as well as a Nursery and Mothers' Room. The Assembly Hall and the Gymnasium are on the ground floor and are used by all age groups at specified times. The Hall, including Gallery, seats 659 persons. It has a well-equipped stage with dressing-rooms underneath it. The Hall is used for dances, whist drives, and social functions and also has all the equipment of an ordinary cinema. Unfortunately, no chair store has been provided and the question of chair storage when the Hall is used for dances will be serious. The main entrance to the Centre opens directly on to a spacious foyer which leads to the Assembly Hall so that it may be used quite independently of the rest of the building. There is both direct and indirect lighting.

The Gymnasium, also on the ground floor, is of regulation size and equipped with modern apparatus conforming to the standards of the Board of Education. The ceiling is high enough so that the room may be used for badminton. There are separate changing-rooms with shower and slipper baths and lavatory accommodation. Two storage rooms open off the Gymnasium but no room has been provided for the instructor, which is an oversight.

A Billiard Room equipped with four full-sized tables adjoins the Gymnasium. Also on the ground floor there is a large Girls' Room which can be divided by a folding partition. It is equipped with all types of indoor games. Above it on the first floor is the Boys' Room, similar in size and shape, which can also be divided by a folding partition. There is equipment for table tennis, chess, and other games. Both the Boys' and Girls' Clubs will have use of the Gymnasium and Library at certain times.

Adult Recreation Rooms are on the first floor over the Billiards Room. They are divided by a folding partition so that they may be used as one for lectures. Table tennis, carpet bowls, darts, skittles, &c., are among the games which can be played. Next to the Recreation Rooms are the Kitchen, service counters and Refreshment Rooms. There is a large Refreshment Room with service counter for adults on one side of the Kitchen and a smaller one on the other side for boys and girls.

In the Basement there are a boiler room, Craft Room, Pram Store and Boys' Billiard Room with two three-quarter size tables.

The Nursery and Mothers' Room is on the ground floor with its own entrance. A nurses' room and lavatories adjoin it. The Nursery is equipped with toys, games and cots. Mothers may leave children here while they are using the other parts of the building or when they are at work. The room may also be used at certain times for sewing and ironing classes.

Although there is a small office with counter for an attendant next to the Welfare Entrance (which may also be used by boys and girls for access to their rooms) there is no office at the Main Entrance or in any other part of the building. All the rooms are large and, with the exception of the Library, devoted to sizeable group activities. One or two much smaller rooms which could be used for committees or as an office would have been useful. Storage space in connection with the adult Recreation Rooms and the Boys' Room has been overlooked altogether, although there is a good store cupboard in the Girls' Room.

## CHATSWORTH INSTITUTE, EDENSOR, BAKEWELL, DERBYSHIRE

### 1. The Institute and the Community :

The Institute is on the Chatsworth Estate, owned by the Duke of Devonshire. The fine, red brick building is of the Georgian period and formerly an hotel. In 1912 it became the Village Institute and a new wing was added which contains the large Assembly Hall, several Committee rooms, and the necessary cloakrooms and lavatories. The old part of the building is mainly used as a Men's Club for village tenants and employees. The Assembly Hall is let to local bodies or to travelling shows. The Women's Institute use it for their large meetings and also use the committee rooms. The Institute is set in the midst of spacious grounds and on the edge of a beautiful and well-preserved village.

### 2. Planning :

The ground and first floor of the old hotel have been turned into a Men's Club. Besides the kitchen and bar, there are a smoke room, reading room, and a billiards room on the ground floor, and another billiards room, library, and a darts room above. Although these rooms are mainly for the use of the Men's Club some (the kitchen for instance) are used occasionally in conjunction with the new wing.

The Assembly Hall is a fine, well-equipped room with a proper stage and a good hardwood floor. It is used for badminton as well as for dances and shows. The cloakrooms and lavatories are behind the stage which is awkward when the Hall is used for shows. It also means that the small side entrance near the stage is used as the chief means of access.

Behind the Hall there is also a Club room used chiefly by the Golf Club, but also used for a dressing room when necessary. There is indirect access to the Hall from the kitchen.

The Chatsworth Institute has premises which are suitable for a real Community Centre. Unfortunately, the section which is available to all the public includes little more accommodation than the ordinary village hall (and is not so conveniently planned as many). The greater part of the building, by being reserved for men and only for tenants and employees at that, ceases to be a true focal point for community life.

### 3. Construction :

Both the old building and its new wing are of brick and timber construction, the additions have been well designed and do not spoil the graceful character



of the original. Internal walls are of plaster and painted. On the ground floor of the old building the floors are of stone, but in the new wing, and in the kitchen and back passages, wood parquet floors are used. On the first floor the board floors have been covered with linoleum.

## HATHERSAGE MEMORIAL HALL, HATHERSAGE, DERBY

### 1. The Hall and the Community :

Hathersage, with a population of about 2100 persons, is only 11 miles from Sheffield. The population is semi-suburban in character, including as it does a large number of Sheffield business and professional persons. The old villagers and the new comers each tend to form their own groups rather than to mix into a single community.

The Memorial Hall was opened in 1929 after funds had been raised by voluntary contributions and by a series of local voluntary efforts. Through the National Council of Social Service a grant was raised toward later additions. A part of the building (now the billiards room) was formerly a chapel.

Adjacent to the Memorial Hall are tennis courts, playing fields bowling greens, paddling pool, and a heated outdoor swimming pool. Although the Parish Council run these facilities, the funds for providing them were mainly given by a wealthy local resident, the National Playing Fields Association giving some grant toward the playing fields. The Memorial Hall is run by its own committee.

### 2. Planning :

The main room has a stage at one end with two committee rooms and the kitchen behind. The cloakrooms and lavatories are also behind the stage, which is inconvenient when the Hall is being used by large groups. Running parallel with the Hall are the billiard room with two full sized tables and another large room which was added shortly before the war. The committee had hoped to turn this into a gymnasium, but at present it is used for whist drives and as a refreshment room.

### 3. Construction :

The Memorial Hall is of local stone construction. The additions have been made in the slightly ecclesiastical style of the original chapel. Interior walls are plastered and painted, with a dark brown painted dado in the main room. There are floors of close boarding throughout, and the building is centrally heated.

The Hall is a disappointing climax to the unusually pleasant amenities which surround it. Of course most of the building was completed before the tennis courts, swimming pool, etc., were built, but even in its most recent addition there has been no attempt to provide views of these facilities or close direct links, except through the men's lavatories which are used jointly by the Hall and the swimming pool.

## ROWSLEY VILLAGE HALL, ROWSLEY, DERBYSHIRE

### 1. The Village Hall and the Community :

Rowsley is a village of some 230 inhabitants and is owned by the Duke of Devonshire. The Village Hall, which is a focal point for all the usual community activities, lives comfortably in its very pleasant surroundings, appearing to be a time honoured part of the neighbourhood. Actually it was opened in 1929 after the people of Rowsley had raised over £3,000 by socials, whist drives and fetes. On several successive Bank Holidays the nearby famous Haddon Hall was thrown open to the public and the money thus taken devoted to Village Hall funds.

One shilling per year is paid in rent to the Haddon estate who retain the deeds of the Hall. Otherwise it is self-supporting. All the social events of the village take place in the Hall, Women's Institute meetings are held there, a badminton team flourishes, and evacuee children use it as a school.

### 2. Planning :

The Hall consists of a large main room with a stage at one end, a kitchen and a committee room behind the stage, cloakrooms off the small entrance lobby. The usual symmetrical plan is abandoned to make the Hall run parallel with the street rather than at right angles. In an informal and small building of this kind, entrance to one corner of the main room is not disturbing.

The stage can slide forward to make it twice its normal size, the light proscenium being so arranged that it too can move forward. The kitchen is large and well fitted and can be used as a dressing room in connection with the stage. The committee room is used mainly by the Women's Institute. It is a large room with a deep bow window and can be used for a dressing room when necessary.

### 3. Construction :

The Hall is built of local stone which is like that used in the other buildings of the village. A timber truss supports the roof which is covered in special roughly cut slates with a well-weathered appearance. Window frames are of metal. Internal walls are plastered throughout but in the main room there is a dado about 3'6" high of vertical boarding. The floors are of close boarding in all the rooms, but in the kitchen the floor is covered in linoleum. The building is centrally heated.

## YOULGREAVE VILLAGE HALL, YOULGREAVE, DERBYSHIRE

### 1. The Village Hall and the Community :

Youlgreave is provided with its Village Hall by a local wealthy family. It was opened about twenty seven years ago and is used intensively by all the community groups. The Women's Institute, the Parish Council, the A.R.P. groups, all hold their meetings in the Hall. It is run by a committee made up of representatives from each of these groups and from each religious denomination. In order to be self-supporting, the committee find it necessary to have cinema shows twice a week as well as the usual dances, lectures, and whist drives.



## 2. Planning:

The main room of the Hall has a stage which can be extended back into the passage which runs along the end of the room. This unusual arrangement calls for no sacrifice of floor space in the Hall although it means that the useful backstage passage is eliminated. The kitchen and library are behind the stage and can be used for dressing rooms when necessary. There is also a small girl's Club room here, now used as the A.R.P. post. In a separate building a few feet away, is the billiard room and a large committee room. There are double doors between these two, one covered in green baize, to eliminate sound interference.

## 3. Construction :

The Hall is in a lovely position on the side of a hill, the building containing the billiard and committee room being at a lower level than the main block. The latter has roof and walls of corrugated iron painted dark green. Interior walls and ceiling are lined with wood boards and the roof is supported by a timber truss. The floor of the hall is of close boarding. In the kitchen and committee rooms the board floors are covered in linoleum.

The billiard hall block is of stone construction with internal walls plastered. In the billiard room the floor is of terazzo, but the adjacent committee room has a board floor covered in linoleum.

### CARNEGIE INSTITUTES, DUNFERMLINE

The City of Dunfermline is peculiarly fortunate in having been the birthplace of Andrew Carnegie, millionaire steel magnate from Pittsburgh. Mr. Carnegie returned to Scotland in his later years and took great delight in lavishing gifts upon his home town. As a result, Dunfermline is richly endowed with public parks, buildings and monuments. There is a separate Carnegie Trust for Dunfermline with an annual income of £50,000 which must be spent on that City alone. Since Dunfermline's population is only 40,000, the annual per capita expenditure is high and the results easily apparent.

A portion of the Dunfermline Trust money has been used to build five Carnegie Institutes in the City. This number is not yet adequate to serve the social and cultural needs of the people, and two more Institutes are being planned. The Institutes are in fact Community Centres in many of their aspects. They include recreational and cultural facilities and each has its own committees who run the dances, concerts, whist drives, etc.

Dunfermline, in war time, is in a danger area, and its A.R.P. services were quickly organised after the outbreak of hostilities. All the Carnegie Institutes were to some extent commandeered for the duration of the war. Some of the rooms in each Institute are available for members, while others are used as A.R.P. posts, blood transfusion posts, etc.

#### Description of Institutes :

##### 1. Baldrighburn :

Like all the Carnegie Institutes this one is extremely well built and well finished on the interior. It is of brick and timber construction, with a tiled roof.

The heart of this building is a large room divided by a folding partition in the daytime so that one section may be used for a reading room in connection with the Library and the other for a Women's Room. At night the room is used as a unit for an Assembly Hall or for badminton. The Library and Lending Department are at the back of the Hall and a Children's Room opens from it.

On the ground floor there is also a domino and chess-room, because these games are extremely popular in Scotland. There is also a Billiards Room with two tables. The Superintendent's office is on the ground floor near the Main Entrance.

In the basement there are excellent baths and a separate large bath for the use of footballers. There is also a workshop here which has been retained especially for the use of the older members. It is now used for dominoes and chess. Behind the Institute, but run as a part of it, are bowling greens and a pavilion for spectators.

The interior is in very good condition because its good finishes stood up well to hard wear. Floors are covered in heavy linoleum. Interior walls are of plaster and painted darker colours below dado level and light cream above. In passageways and on the stairs, walls are tiled to dado height. In the rooms there are chair rails to protect the walls. The theory behind the Institutes has been that good buildings command respect from those who use them, and certainly this idea seems to have been proved in practice in Dunfermline.

## 2. Rosyth Institute :

This is the only one of the Carnegie Institutes in Dunfermline which occupies a site which was reserved on the original town plan of its neighbourhood. The building stands in a fine central position at the head of a street which is the shopping centre of a new housing estate. There is ample room around the Institute and the front gardens are carefully planted and tended.

The Institute is built of local stone and cost £15,000. It was opened in 1924. There is the usual central library with combined Children's Room and Child Welfare Clinic opening off it. A Ladies' Room and a Common Room are also on the ground floor. The Billiards Room has three full-sized tables, and there is a Games Room for chess and dominoes. The Assembly Hall in this Institute is a single large room and is used for dances, whist drives and badminton.

In the basement there are changing-rooms and a bath for footballers and a reading and domino room for old men. An interesting basement feature here is the carpet bowls room. The equipment for this game is comparatively inexpensive and it is very popular locally.

Like the other Carnegie Institutes, the one at Rosyth follows the tradition of good materials and solid construction. After fifteen years of use the interior was still bright and cheerful, and bore few traces of the constant hard usage which it has received. Floors in passageways and lavatories are of terrazzo and in other rooms of boards covered with heavy linoleum. Walls of passages and on stairs have tiles to dado height.



## NORRIS GREEN COMMUNITY CENTRE, LIVERPOOL

The New Estates Council of Social Welfare in Liverpool is concerned with promoting the well being of the residents of new council housing estates on the great dormitory fringe which has grown up on the outskirts of the town since the last war. It seeks to promote the welfare mainly through adult education and through Community Associations. The provision of Community Centres is one of the primary considerations of the Council. Had it not been for the war, Liverpool would have possessed several new Centres.

In 1939 the plans were already prepared by the Director of Housing for a Centre at Norris Green and it was proposed to proceed immediately with preparation of plans for similar Centres on other estates. Unfortunately, the war and the consequent limitation of the peace-time building programmes, together with the suspension of the National Fitness Council, have brought these plans to a temporary standstill.

The work of several Community Associations still goes on, however, in temporary and inadequate premises.

The Norris Green Community Association has its offices in a council house less than a hundred yards from the timber hut which they use for meetings, socials, and dances. The council house was granted in 1939 as a temporary measure. The Association has been in existence for about nine years, has 31 constituent bodies, and an individual membership organised into six sections.

### (a) Situation :

Both the Community Centre and its offices are located at the edge of the Norris Green Estate and are cut off physically from other adjacent council housing in the Larkhill Estate by the Cheshire Lines Railway. Taking the two estates together, however, the Centre is certainly at the hub of a large area of council housing and people do come to the Centre from the Larkhill region. Remote corners of both estates, however, provide few members. The Norris Green Estate alone has a population of 40,000 persons.

### (b) The Centre and the Community :

The regular membership of the Centre is 300, but the membership of the numerous affiliated bodies who use the building runs into many thousands. Members come from the various lower income groups and include labourers, factory workers, policemen, tram drivers, etc. Young married couples use the Centre less than any other age groups.

Activities of the Association include a chess club, a literary and debating society, an amateur dramatic society, swimming club, adult education classes, Women's Keep Fit Classes, house-keeping classes, etc.

### (c) The Buildings :

The offices, as mentioned above, are in a council house of the usual type. The Centre itself is a timber hut designed at a minimum of cost with the idea of its being temporary. It is rather like an army hut in character. There are cloakrooms and kitchen at one end, and platform, stage and dressing-rooms at the other.

(d) Proposed New Community Centre :

The Liverpool Corporation had considered the idea of a new Centre at Norris Green and before the war the City Architect had drawn up plans for the building. The new Centre was to have included an Assembly Hall for 420 persons, a small hall, a Gymnasium, Common Room, Craft Room, Games Room, a few small rooms for Committees, and the necessary cloakroom, lavatory, and storage accommodation. A Public Library, Clinic, Meals' Centre and Boys' Club already exist in this neighbourhood so they have not been included in the plans. The plan for the new Centre suffers because of the cramped site which it is to occupy, but there seems to be a good functional arrangement of the various elements in the building. The nature of the site makes four entrances necessary which will undoubtedly make problems of supervision.

### SETTLEMENTS, LONDON

Settlements are in many ways akin to Community Centres. It is even fair to say that there are more similarities between the two than differences. There is, first of all, the similar purpose which they share - to provide social, recreational and educational activities for the members of the community in which they are located. In the physical facilities of the two, there is also some similarity since they are each equipped with club rooms, committee rooms, halls, gymnasias, etc.

Settlements differ from Community Centres mainly in their underlying organisation. Whereas the latter aim at being democratic organisations secured and managed by their own Community Associations, settlements are planned and run by groups of charitable and socially-minded persons of a different class from those whom they hope to benefit. Living accommodation for not only the Warden or Secretary but for groups of part-time social workers is provided in Settlements. The social workers devote some of their energies to educational or recreational work among the people of the community. Originally, there was a strong religious flavour about most Settlements. To-day, this is often less apparent; primary emphasis is placed on social and educational activities, and members have more share in running activities.

In spite of the advances in building technique since most Settlements were built, they have lessons to teach where sound construction, and sturdy finishes and equipment are concerned.

#### Description of Settlements visited :

##### 1. Mary Ward Settlement, Tavistock Place, Bloomsbury :

###### (a) Situation :

The Mary Ward Settlement was opened in 1891. Although adjacent to one of the Bloomsbury squares, it was then, surrounded on three sides by very poor districts. Now, however, the neighbourhood has changed and the Settlement had decided before the war to move to a poorer district. The building was placed on an ample site with gardens at the rear and sides. A separate club building for girls was later added.



(b) The Settlement and the Community :

The adults who use the Mary Ward Settlement and attend classes come from all over London and the Home Counties. Members of the Boys' and Girls' Clubs are drawn from all sides of the settlement within a radius of about one and one-half miles. There is a Members' Committee which has two representatives on the Council.

One of the chief activities at Mary Ward is the People's College, which aims at being something more than an evening institute by fostering social activities occasionally. Other activities include a Women's Club, an Occupational Club, (chiefly for unemployed men), a Girls' and a Boys' Club, the Nursery School, the Play Centre, and, finally, the very important Tavistock Little Theatre.

The war has decreased adult attendances at evening classes, but the boys' and young men's clubs have increased in size and activity.

(c) Planning :

The ground floor of the settlement contains a library and Common Room, a residents' Dining Hall, and a Lecture Room. Experience has shown that more books are kept in circulation by having the Library incorporated in a social room than by having it in a quiet inner sanctuary. The Common Room is used mainly in the evenings for socials, teas, poetry readings, etc.

The canteen is open from four o'clock in the afternoon for teas and suppers. It is used extensively by the many persons from distant parts of London who attend evening classes at the Settlement.

The classrooms are used only at night by the Settlement itself since the war. In the daytime they are used by children's groups, organised because many schools were closed. One of the classrooms can be used as an extra canteen.

The Residents' Dining Hall is used for breakfasts, lunches, and dinners, but is cleared out at 7.15 p.m. and used as a lecture room in the evenings. It faces to the rear gardens and is a very pleasant room.

The Lecture Room is now used mainly as a play centre for children in an attempt to keep unevacuated children off the streets.

On the first floor there are small classrooms for groups of fifteen students, and the maids' bedrooms (with separate stair down to Kitchen). On the second floor are the Residents' Sitting Room, the Warden's Flat, and a few residents' bedrooms. The third floor is devoted to bedrooms.

In the Basement is the Boys' Club which includes a club-room, canteen, library, workshop and gymnasium. About 30 boys attend every night. They have a separate entrance off the main lobby. The gymnasium can be used by persons over 18 years of age on Saturday and Sunday. There is also a workroom used by boys and unemployed men, a games' room for boys over eighteen, a committee room for the Boys' Club and the boiler room.

The Little Theatre is incorporated in the main building and seats about 350 persons. There is a fully-equipped stage and adequate dressing-rooms.

The Girls' Club is in a separate building with its own street entrance. Although boys and girls have many mixed activities at the Settlement, the importance of separate entrances was stressed. The ground floor is devoted to a large hall and lavatories and cloakrooms. On the first floor, there is a large room with a kitchen at one end which can be used for cookery demonstrations. There is a Girls' sitting room and library on this floor and a small committee room off the half landing.

Although the Mary Ward Settlement is nearly fifty years old, its plan still seems to meet modern requirements remarkably well. The rooms are well proportioned and have good windows which let in plenty of sunlight and fresh air.

(d) The settlement is a four-storey building of brick and timber construction. Exterior walls are finished in a dark, red brick. Interior walls are plastered and painted. Floors in rooms are covered with linoleum and in corridors there is a central strip of lino.

The furniture is an odd collection which has grown over many years. In the Boys' Club stacking metal chairs with seats and backs of metal basketwork are used. The interior colour schemes tend to be dark and violent, with a great preference shown for greens and browns.

There is central heating on the ground floor and in the theatre. In the Girls' Club there is a tiled dado in the passageways, on the staircase, and in the large hall.

## 2. Oxford House, Bethnal Green :

### (a) Origin and Situation :

Oxford House was built in 1882. It was started by a group of Oxford men, but Oxford University is in no way responsible for it now, although the various colleges do subscribe money. The House receives an annual income of £4,000 from gifts and subscriptions and £1,000 from letting a building as a cinema.

Oxford House fully occupies a site in a densely populated and poor neighbourhood and does not, like Mary Ward, enjoy a surrounding of gardens and trees. They own several other very old buildings in the neighbourhood, which are all used as clubs. Although Oxford House is not a Community Centre in the real sense, it incorporates nearly all Community Centre activities in its various buildings.

### (b) The Settlement and the Community :

The present Warden of Oxford House took up his post in the late winter of 1939. In his opinion, the primary duty of the Settlement is to bridge the gap between the east and west, between Oxford and Bethnal Green. The Settlement is most important, in his opinion, as a meeting-ground for social activities. Evening classes and other cultural activities are the functions of the Community Centre and such Centres should be provided by the Local Authority as one of the accepted public services.

The Settlement runs two Boys' Clubs and a Men's Club in Oxford House. Girls and women are allowed on special nights, but in future it is hoped to have separate clubs for them. There were no evening classes at the time the Settlement was visited, but they were hoping to have some L.C.C. classes soon.



Oxford House was closed at the beginning of the war and was only partially re-opened last spring.

(c) Planning :

The Settlement has two distinct sections - one containing the residents' quarters, and the other devoted to members. In the residents' section there is a library, common room, dining-hall on the ground floor. On the first floor, there are the residents' bedrooms. On the second floor, there is a chapel and two flats for married couples. In the basement are the Kitchen and Servants' dining-hall. All this part of the House is extremely well kept and cheerful in appearance. Furniture is pleasant and the windows are hung with bright curtains.

In the members' section there is a large hall, a small hall, Men's Club, canteen, library and card-room, a games' room, club and committee-rooms. The large hall seats 250 people and has a stage, changing-rooms and bathrooms adjacent. It is used for the Men's Club gymnasium, boxing, concerts, dances, etc., and is heated by gas radiators. The small hall is used for dances and rehearsals. It also has a hardwood floor. There is central heating. The canteen adjoins the card-room and is a cheerful place. The games' room contains three full-sized billiard tables and a ping-pong table.

Floors are linoleum covered except in halls and the colour schemes are much darker and more utilitarian than in the residents' section.

#### ST. HELIER COMMUNITY CENTRE, MORDEN

The St. Helier Community Association started life in a council house. Later they were able to get a timber hall which they retained and used for large dances and social events until it was damaged in an air raid. About four years ago the Association moved into their present headquarters, a pleasant residential building about one hundred years old. The London County Council paid for the necessary alterations to the Centre and its grounds. The Association is completely self-supporting now. Before the war, negotiations with the local authority were under way, and the Association hoped to get a new community hall on the site of their present timber hut. The air raids have reduced but not stopped activities.

1. Situation :

The St. Helier Community Centre is on the border-line between the Boroughs of Carshalton and Morden, but is in the heart of a London County Council Housing Estate of 50,000 residents. The building is set among lovely and spacious grounds which are cared for by the L.C.C. There is a children's playground behind the Centre and another rough field in front where children may play. There are more formal gardens flanking the approach to the house. These are in excellent condition, but children are not allowed to enter them unless accompanied by adults. At one side of the Centre there is an extremely pleasant walled garden for the use of old people.

There is a sense of space and freedom in the arrangement of this site. The approach to the house is up a drive bordered by trees and flowers. There is ample room all around the building for extensions in any direction, and the

site is so planned that it can be easily altered and adapted to changing conditions. If the Association is able to build a new Community Hall after the war, they would do well to plan for it in the Community Centre grounds, rather than on the site of their old hut which is several hundred yards away. It would be a pity to dissociate the Community Hall from the Centre where it is possible to link the two closely together.

Nearly all the people who use the Centre regularly are from the estate, but a few come from the surrounding area.

## 2. The Centre and the Community :

There are many organisations affiliated to the Centre, which help it to be self-supporting. In the first winter of the war seven more organisations sought affiliation. At this Centre it was found that the chief drawback of individual membership was the response from an overwhelming crowd of young people for whom there were inadequate facilities.

The Warden is a resident of the housing estate. Her salary is paid by the Community Association and she has held this post for nine years.

In addition to social and recreational activities, the programme of the Centre usually includes some Workers' Educational Association classes. Since the war there are two Citizen's Advice Bureaux at the Centre, one for Carshalton and one for Morden.

## 3. Planning :

At one time the Community Association used both floors of the house. When war started the Local Authority took possession of the first floor for Emergency offices. The L.C.C. has always kept one wing. The rooms on the ground floor which remain for the Centre include an office, two large rooms for social events and meetings, a canteen, and a clinic. The office is a spacious room and is now used by one of the Citizens' Advice Bureaux. The large room at the rear of the house is used for dances and socials and is occasionally let for weddings. It has a recess at one end which is used for storing chairs. The room is in good condition but the colours are dark and drab and the furnishings uninteresting. The linoleum covering the floor makes it possible to use the room for dancing.

The second community room is nearly as large as the first, but is long and narrow, and has a rough floor unsuitable for dancing. It is used for meetings, socials, whist drives, etc., and is furnished with folding wood chairs and tables, and a piano. The walls evidently remain as they were before the Community Association moved in, because they are covered with astonishing wallpaper which sports great clumps of flowers and vines.

The clinic is a large, bare room with a dentist's chair in one corner and a few kitchen chairs lined up against the opposite wall. It is used each morning for a dental clinic and two afternoons a week for an animal clinic.

The canteen is again a spacious room with a counter against one corner and chairs and tables scattered about. Although it shows no signs of any positive attempt at decoration, it has somehow acquired a strong character and looks alive.



It is unfair to criticize the way in which this charming old house has been turned into a Community Centre without seeing all of it functioning as it was in peace-time. But it must be admitted that to enter the building and to see the dark, gloomy corridors, and the shabby rooms, is to receive a shock of disappointment. Approaching the house between borders of daffodils and under friendly trees whets the appetite for something more than the Centre has to offer at present.

#### NORTH DOWNHAM, S.E. LONDON

The first building used as a Centre by this Community Association was a council cottage on the local London County Council Housing Estate. The idea was to get the Association formed and activities started here. The Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths in London gave a capital grant of £13,500 for the present community building which was opened in the spring of 1939. A grant of £2,000 for building and equipping the gymnasium was secured through the National Fitness Council. The London County Council advised on the type of equipment for the gymnasium.

There is a Mothers' and Children's Welfare Clinic in the Centre with visiting doctors and a nurse provided by the Lewisham Borough Council. The Council pays the Centre three pounds per week rent for the use of these rooms.

#### 1. Situation :

The Goldsmiths' Community Centre is well located in relation to the neighbourhood it serves. It is in the heart of the newest section of the London County Council Housing Estate. The site itself is not an ideal one from the standpoint of view or commanding position, but it has the advantage of being central and of being immediately adjacent to a large open field which is some day to be a recreation ground. At present the field is being used for allotments. Beyond this stretch of open ground there is a border of old residential property along the edge of the main road which skirts the estate on this side. The Community Centre feels that, if the residents of the older houses (who are of approximately the same income groups as those on the estate) had a more direct means of access, that they would be anxious to make use of the community facilities provided. To make such access possible a public footpath across the open field is suggested. The Goldsmiths Company have promised a further grant for finishing the grounds of the Centre.

#### 2. The Centre and the Community :

In the spring of 1940 the Community Centre had a membership of 1,000 on its books. There are a number of affiliated organisations who use the Centre as well. The war and the calling up of young men has affected the Association.

During the first winter of the war the Centre had no Air Raid Shelters and consequently the London County Council refused to run evening classes unless no more than 50 people were in the building at one time. Shelters are now being built and classes may be started.

The Centre has separate accommodation for adults and juveniles, and a full programme of activities can be developed.

### 3. Planning :

The Centre includes an Assembly Hall for about 400 persons, a gymnasium, a Mothers' and Infants' Welfare Clinic, an adult section, and a juvenile section. A very compact, square plan has been adopted with the gymnasium in the heart of the building. Such a plan will not lend itself readily to extensions or alterations, but as it has already been developed on an ambitious scale it will probably not be necessary to increase the size of the present building. If the neighbourhood should grow to such an extent that the Centre were unable to serve its needs, it would mean that an additional community building was needed in a new area rather than that large scale extensions should be added to this one.

The Hall is at the rear of the Centre and has its own entrance from a side street. There are adequate and well equipped cloakrooms and lavatories in connection with this entrance. The stage is good, but there are no specially-planned dressing-rooms. Instead, the Clinic is used in the evenings for dressing-rooms, an arrangement to which the Lewisham Borough Council has agreed. Considering the other fine facilities with which this hall has been provided, it seems a pity that its own dressing-rooms could not have been included. Dressing for amateur theatricals is usually a hectic and untidy business, and not suited to the clinic atmosphere. Access to the Hall from the Centre is through the billiards-room.

The gymnasium is well equipped and has separate changing-rooms for men and women. There is a large store cupboard for equipment.

In the adult wing there are several small rooms for committees and meetings, a Common Room, a Canteen and a Billiards Room. The Common Room is an extremely pleasant room but is unfortunately so situated that it becomes a passageway to the Billiards Room and Large Hall. In fact, the room is so noisy that the adults have taken over the Junior Common Room in the other wing.

The Billiard Room started out rather indefinitely as a games room with two gas-cookers along one wall. The idea was to hold cooking demonstration classes on certain afternoons. When two full-sized billiard-tables arrived at the Centre the gas cookers disappeared. They couldn't compete, and, in any case, the billiard-tables left little room for students of cookery.

The Canteen has service hatches into the common room, the Billiard Room and the large Hall. It is a well-shaped room with sink, cooker, and very ample cupboards. (The cupboard doors of gaboon were too large and heavy to slide easily and had to be rebuilt.)

In the Juvenile Wing the Common Room is better situated and has only a door into the Canteen and one into the passage. It was not fully used by the young people and has proved to be more suitable for the needs of the adults than their own room. A Canteen separates it from the two spacious rooms where the juveniles have their club meetings and evening classes, and at the same time, acts as a buffer to keep out noise. A folding and sliding partition separates the two juvenile club rooms so that they can be easily thrown into one big room for certain activities. The folding partition, however, has not proved very sound-proof and the young people would have to be careful to avoid noisy activities in one room when evening classes are going on next door.



An interesting experiment with open cloak-rooms has been tried out at this Centre. The idea is that pilfering can be minimised if the coats are not hidden away behind a closed door. Experience has already proved that this system works both ways, and that coats are now temptingly within reach of those who might risk petty thievery.

The loft is used for storage space and is reached through trap-doors. The room is very adequate and the difficulty of reaching it has not yet caused any complaints at the Centre.

#### Construction, Finishes and Equipment :

The Centre is a one-storey building with brick walls. The exterior walls are finished in a dull red brick. The roof is of timber and covered with tiles. The interior walls are finished in a rough plaster paint which covers the brick-work but allows the joints to show through faintly. The texture obtained in this way is extremely pleasant.

There are hardwood floors in the Hall, Gymnasium and passageways, and board floors of deal in most rooms. The hardwood floors in the passageways have proved extremely noisy. Lavatories are tiled throughout. Doors and woodwork are of gaboon. There is central heating throughout the building.

The Goldsmiths' Centre is particularly fortunate in having had, not only adequate funds for furnishing and decorating the building, but in having had the advice of a trained person. Miss Elizabeth Denby advised on the choice of colour schemes and on furniture and decorations. The cheery colourful interior of the Centre shows at once that someone with keen interest and imagination has had a hand in making the place something more than a mere shell filled with dull and nondescript furniture. Wall colours vary in different parts of the building but are always warm and light. In the Common Rooms there are gay printed curtains, light oak armchairs upholstered in brightly-coloured rexine, and natural coloured cocoanut matting on the floors. Other Centres would do well to profit by this example and seek the advice of a trained person in choosing their colour schemes and fittings.

#### VILLAGE HALLS, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

The Nottinghamshire Rural Community Council was inaugurated in 1924 with financial help from the Carnegie Trustees who agreed to provide money for its maintenance in the initial stages if it proved its value. The R.C.C. is "... An experiment in social service, based on the conception of the co-ordination of effort among voluntary social service bodies and co-operation with the statutory authorities . . . " As the years have passed, the R.C.C. has extended its scope and has co-operated with several County Council Committees in pioneering new social services.

They are keenly interested in preserving and stimulating village life and in helping to provide social, recreational, and cultural facilities in keeping with the traditions of village life. Already, largely owing to these efforts, over 60% of Nottinghamshire villages now have public halls and over 70% maintain either a Rural Evening Institute, an R.C.C. Branch or Class, a Dramatic Society, Women's Institute, or University Adult Education Classes.

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\* ..... Mr. Neale, Secretary, Notts. Rural Community Council.

Since the outbreak of war, the Nottinghamshire R.C.C. continues its good work, particularly in the field of educational activities. In some cases the number of classes has been restricted, but the blackout has not been such a deterrent in the country as in the town. Play centres for evacuated children and winter clothing funds are also war-time concerns of the Council.

There are similar Rural Community Councils in 23 other counties.

#### Cropwell Butler Village Hall :

##### 1. The Village Hall and the Community :

The Cropwell Butler Hall is a timber hut about two years old. It was erected by a local firm with the voluntary aid of a local architect. The total cost was £750.

The Hall is used by the Women's Institute, by University Adult Education classes, by a Drama Group, and for dances and other social activities. Since the war it has been used by evacuee children as a play centre. A Social Planning Committee, which consists of the Village Hall Committee (as representatives of all the voluntary bodies in the village), a representative of the Women's Voluntary Services, the local head-teacher, the evacuated teacher, and the billeting officer, hopes to deal with the problems and difficulties which may arise during the war, such as war comforts for the services, pensions, and soldiers' allowances.

##### 2. Planning :

The Hall consists of a hut 24' x 40' with lavatories and a kitchen adjoining at the side. There is a temporary stage with storage for chairs under it. The Kitchen is used for a dressing-room when plays are produced. It is unfortunate that the lavatories are at one side of the Hall and open directly off it instead of being at one end with access from a lobby.

##### 3. Construction :

The Hall is of timber frame construction. The exterior walls are covered with timber weather-boarding, and the interior walls lined with plaster board. The floors are of deal boards.

#### COMMUNITY CENTRES, OXFORD

In recent years the population of Oxford has been decentralized into new housing estates on the periphery of the city. Some of these cross the city boundary and come under the jurisdiction of a rural authority. In this way, the problem of educational and social facilities, always difficult enough on new housing estates, has been made even more involved.

The most densely populated part of Oxford is the region to the east of the City which includes the Morris motor works and the Pressed Steel Works. The need for social and cultural centres in this area is great.



The Community Centres Committee was formed by the Oxford Education Committee. It grew out of pioneer work done by the Oxford Council of Social Service in starting two Community Centres, and its function is to provide social activities on new housing estates and to advise the Oxford City Corporation. An annual grant of £300 for Community Centres work was secured from the City Education Committee. The Community Centres Committee is composed of eight representatives from the City Council, two from the Oxford Council of Social Service, two from the Oxford Juvenile Organisations Committee, and three from the Community Centres Federation. This last Federation is composed of two representatives from each Community Association in Oxford, and its purpose is to foster joint activities and discussion of common problems. The Secretary of the Community Centres Committee, whose appointment was made possible by the grant of the Education Committee to the Council of Social Service, is a supervisor of the work in Oxford Community Centres. He has charge of administrative work in connection with all Centres, advises the local committees, recruits voluntary workers, and gives advice on financial matters.

There are four Community Centres in Oxford at present, and the plans of a fifth have been approved by the Board of Education. Three of the Centres are in old premises converted for use by Community Associations and the fourth is in a new, but temporary, building built by the Oxford Council of Social Service. The new housing estates have only about 500 houses each.

#### Description of Centres :

##### 1. The South Ward Social Guild :

At a cost of £2,250, the City has converted an old waterworks building into a social centre. Additions were made in the form of a billiard room, entrance, foyer, and extra committee room at a cost of £1,250. Adaptation of the older part of the building cost £1,000. The Guild normally pays £90 per annum to the city for rent.

The South Ward Social Guild has the best premises of their kind in Oxford. When first opened it was extremely popular and had a membership of 1,600, drawn from all parts of the City. Since then, of course, there has been a decrease in numbers and there is now a steady membership of three to four hundred persons. Members included men and women over eighteen years of age and come from all parts of Oxford.

The Guild is in an old residential area and on a spacious and pleasant site. The filter beds behind the building have given way to a City swimming pool.

Activities include dancing, billiards, table-tennis, organised physical training, drama, concerts, debates and discussions. It now houses an evacuated school during the day.

On the ground floor in the former boiler house there is a billiards room with two tables and a table-tennis room. On the first floor, there are club rooms for boys and girls and the Assembly Hall. The Hall has a moveable stage at one end and an extension at one side separated by a sliding and folding partition so that it may be used by itself or in conjunction with the Hall.

The old waterworks is of brick and timber construction. It is still in excellent condition and has proved easy to adapt to its present role. Interior walls are finished in brick and painted. The floors of stairs and passageways

are concrete. There is a hardwood board floor in the Hall and its extension. The building is centrally heated from a gas fired boiler. Interior walls are painted with light and cheerful colours and the general appearance is clean and stimulating.

## 2. The Wolvercote Community Centre :

The Housing Committee had reserved an old farm in the middle of a new estate with the intention of turning it into a "Housing Centre". The farm, however, was eventually handed over to the Education Committee, who have made it into a Community Centre. It is set in an acre of open ground, formerly planted with grass, flowers and trees, but now cultivated as allotments by the members.

There are about 120 members of the Wolvercote Centre and most of these are women. Very few men come to the old farm and there are only about 40 in the boys' and girls' clubs. Members come almost entirely from the new estate and not from the nearby village. The villagers do not welcome the new Centre and feel that the city would have done better to extend their own Village Hall. In spite of suggestions from the Council that both the Hall and the Centre could be shared, the village remains aloof.

Activities at this Centre include a Women's Club, Men's Club, Boys' Club, Girls' Club, Scouts, Drama and Discussion Groups, Crafts, Musical Evenings, Cookery Talks, Socials, etc. The Association is trying hard to be self-supporting but finds it difficult to raise money when there is no large hall or meeting-room in the farmhouse.

There is a resident warden at the Centre. In return for her services she lives rent free. The fact that the Warden lives at the Centre is felt to be largely responsible for the progressive nature of the establishment, and is certainly responsible for much of the cheerful and homelike atmosphere which surrounds the friendly old building.

The chief drawback of the farm is that all the rooms are small. No group activities for more than 40 people can take place. On the ground floor there is a Social or Common Room with a large fireplace and comfortable chairs. The windows are curtained, the floor covered with matting, and the general effect is encouragingly cheerful. This room is used for women's meetings and small socials. Since the war it is used as a quiet room for a few hours each evening so that evacuated children may do their home-lessons. The Kitchen is old-fashioned and large. It is used for cookery demonstrations. There are changing rooms and lavatories on the ground floor.

On the first floor there is a "general purpose" room used for club meetings and for a children's creche. It is a bare little room with wooden chairs round the walls and a hard used look about it. There are two other small rooms. One is apparently devoted to the use of boys in general and Boy Scouts in particular. The other is almost completely occupied by a table-tennis trestle.

The farmhouse is of brick and timber construction, with a timber roof covered with slates. On the ground floor the old stone floors have been retained. On the next floor the wide deal boards are left uncovered. Where the building has been redecorated, gay colours have been chosen and light walls predominate. Upstairs some of the old farmhouse wall-papers remain, and though startling, are cheerful.



### 3. Osney Social Club :

Although more limited in its accommodation than other Oxford Centres, the Osney Club is equally interesting. It is located in Osney Town, formerly so swampy a place that it was always called Frog Island. The neighbourhood is, in actual fact, geographically an island and is the home of nearly 220 families, all railway workers. The local residents know each other well and there is a strong background of tradition in the very atmosphere. The small homes of the workers are in tight rows after the fashion of the last century.

In the middle of one of these rows of bleak little houses, there is a change of character. Two houses have been converted into one, first to make a Methodist Chapel, and now for the Osney Social Club. The building came as a gift to the Osney Association, who have therefore been able to pay rates and be self-supporting since the opening in 1937. The Centre has since been presented to the City Council.

Before the war, the Association had a membership of over 200. Since, the membership has fallen off, particularly among the young men. This Centre has benefited by the really unique spirit of friendliness among the people of the neighbourhood. Activities include Boys' and Girls' Clubs, Mixed Clubs, Women's and Men's Clubs, socials and dances, drama section, film shows, whist drives and monthly suppers. The Club consists of the one big room with a stage at one end (built by members) and a simple kitchen at the front, occupying what used to be an old shop. The hall is plain and barnlike, furnished with a few rough chairs and tables, and there are no first floor rooms, since the Hall rises to the full height of the old house. The building is of brick and timber construction. Walls are of brick, plastered internally; the roof is of timber covered with slates and supported by a timber truss.

### SOUTH READING COMMUNITY CENTRE, READING

This community building has been built by the local Education Community with grants from the Government made possible by the Education Act of 1926, and the Physical Training and Recreation Act of 1937. The Board of Education has paid 50% of the capital cost of the building and the local Education Committee has raised the other 50% and will also be responsible for the cost of maintenance. The completed Centre cost about £20,000, furnishings and equipment another £1,600.

It is expected that the bulk of the membership will be drawn from the housing estate in the immediate neighbourhood of the Centre.

#### 1. Situation :

The Centre is located in the heart of the Whitley Housing Estate. It is an estate of about 2,000 houses, and there is an area of privately-built housing nearby which the Centre is also expected to serve. The residents work in Reading and have not more than an average of fifteen or twenty minutes' journey to their work. The local shopping centre and the school are not far distant.

#### 2. The Centre and the Community :

The Warden is paid by the local Education Committee and lives in a Council

house directly opposite the Centre. He came to the neighbourhood before the completion of the building to make contacts and learn what he could about the people with whom he would be working.

Since its opening in September, 1940, the Centre has been occupied with evacuee work, communal feeding, billeting, and other war-time activities. The local residents have, unfortunately, gained the impression that the Centre is meant for evacuees.

### 3. Planning :

The accommodation includes an adult and a juvenile wing, an Assembly Hall for about 400 persons, a Gymnasium, and a Library. The plan is tight and symmetrical (which will make extensions difficult), with long interior corridors, and the Assembly Hall is in the heart of the building with light from a narrow courtyard. The front facade is in the shape of a forecourt with a central entrance to the Hall and an entrance on either side to the adult and juvenile wings. Cloakrooms and lavatories for the Hall project into the forecourt, making it a cramped and ungracious affair with dark, narrow corners on either side (which will be dirty and hard to supervise).

Points to be admired in the plan are the separate wings for adults and juniors and the good Gymnasium, well situated at the rear of the building and with showers and changing-rooms acting as insulation between it and the other rooms. The juvenile wing has Common Rooms for boys and girls with their own Canteen between, several crafts rooms, and a workshop as well as good lavatories and cloakrooms. There is easy access to the Gymnasium and changing-rooms at the back. In connection with the workshop there is a storeroom and also a separate back entrance for bringing in heavy materials. There is a Library in this wing and the Warden's Office.

In the adult wing there are Recreation and Games' Rooms, a Common Room, Kitchen, Office, and small service Canteen into the Recreation Room. The Kitchen is so situated that it cannot serve the Assembly Hall directly, and at the time the Centre was visited, there was not even a service hatch into the adjacent Common Room. Instead, a counter was planned to serve directly into the corridor. This idea, if carried out, will certainly prove unsatisfactory and will be a cause of congestion at this point on the plan. It is unfortunate, too, that services must be duplicated as they are by having an extra small canteen to serve the Recreation Room.

Although it is excellent to have individual wings for adults and juveniles, the separate entrances either side of the forecourt raise problems of supervision. Again rooms must be duplicated and the Warden must have an office in each wing, although obviously he cannot be in both at one time. Where there is one warden only in a Community Centre, this seems to be a strong argument in favour of a single and centrally located entrance, overlooked by the Warden's office and providing easy access to the different sections of the building. If, however a youth leader is also to be provided, the separation of the two wings would be more advantageous.

There is one sliding and folding partition used in the plan, although more might have proved useful in the junior block where there is not a great variety of room sizes. The one partition of this type is found between the canteen and girls' common room so that the two may be used together for cookery demonstrations.



#### 4. Construction :

The Centre is a one-storey building. Walls are of brick, the roof of steel trusses and timber trusses. It is in the Georgian style and the exterior walls are finished in red brick. The appearance from the outside gives no clue to what goes on inside. It might just as easily be a Clinic or a Library as a Community Centre. Interior walls in passageways and in some of the rooms are of brick and distempered. Other walls are finished in plaster and distempered. The Assembly Hall has a floor of oak boards on joists and Gymnasium floor is of maple boards on joists. Corridor floors are of granwood, a composition material. Floors in lavatories are of coloured cement and in showers are of asphalt tiles. In the adult wing the floors are mainly of deal boards on joists, excepting the committee room and Canteen where they are wood block on concrete. In the juvenile wing floors are of wood blocks on concrete in the Common Rooms, Kitchen and Workshop, and of deal boards on joists elsewhere.

Window frames on the front facade of the Centre are of metal, but in other parts of the building they are of wood. The interior corridors are lit by roof lights, which have proved a blackout problem.

There is central heating throughout the building and the radiators are set in reveals in the walls.

#### MANOR COMMUNITY CENTRE, SHEFFIELD

The Manor Community Centre was the first in the country to be built by a Local Authority. Its history begins when a Community Association was formed on the Manor Estate. The Association held its first meetings in a council house and secured a grant of £1,000 from the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust. With these funds available a full-time secretary was appointed to help organise the Association and to try to get a community building.

The Association approached the Sheffield Corporation with their requests for a Community Centre. The City Architect drew up plans for a £20,000 project, which was first cut to £10,000 and eventually to £5,000. An appropriation for £5,000 was approved and the Centre was opened in 1934, its cost having been borne entirely by the Corporation. All maintenance charges are borne by the Corporation. A grant of £3. 0. 0 per week for part of Steward's wages is received from the Housing Revenue Account.

There was, at first, considerable local opposition to the Community Centre. People were afraid that political, rather than social and cultural activities, would flourish. By now, however, the Centre seems to have won general approval, even among those who originally were strongly opposed to it. It is worth noting that the original opposition did not come from the people on the estate.

In November 1940 the Centre was almost entirely destroyed in an air raid.

#### Description :

##### 1. Situation :

The Manor Centre was situated near the heart of a municipal housing estate on which 2,000 families live. It was not more than a fifteen-minute

tram-ride from the middle of Sheffield.

The site, which slopes rapidly away at the rear, is on a corner and the building faces the angle. The grounds are owned and maintained by the municipality and are in excellent condition. There are two bowling greens and ten tennis courts adjacent to the Centre. A pleasant and spacious garden in front of the Centre made an attractive approach which adds dignity and character to the whole place.

## 2. The Centre and the Community :

Membership was on a family basis which included the father, mother, and any children up to the age of 16. Such a membership cost six shillings per year and a total of 600 adults were registered under the scheme. Nearly all the members were from the Manor Estate. Through its affiliated bodies the Association is in contact with nearly 2,000 families. There was a children's group open to those between the ages of seven and fourteen years of age. There were many young people on the estate between the ages of sixteen and twenty, but there was no opportunity for them at the Centre in the form of juvenile games rooms, craft rooms, or even club rooms.

Among those who used the Centre regularly there was a fairly equal division between men and women, and between young and old people. Old Age Pensioners were given free membership.

The Centre was run on a membership basis from the beginning, but owing to weakness of control, the membership got out of hand. Because the Centre was small, the billiards room proved out of proportion to other rooms and their activities. A rowdy element was attracted and therefore the Centre was closed for a month. When it was re-opened, applicants for membership had to appear before the Executive Committee and learn something of the responsibilities of membership before being accepted. The billiard table was removed while the Centre was closed and was never replaced.

The Centre was not entirely self-supporting and could not be unless cultural and educational activities were abandoned in favour of purely money-making schemes, which the Association was not anxious to do. There is great interest on the estate in drama, opera, music, Workers' Educational Association, physical training, etc. The Centre was used by affiliated organisations such as political parties, garden societies, and bowling clubs. The canteen was run by volunteers and in 1939 turned over £1,100.

The Centre was in the hands of a Council composed of fifteen members of the Community Association and one member of each affiliated organisation. The warden was paid from the Association funds, and lived on the estate near the Centre.

## 3. Planning :

The Manor Centre was very small considering the number of persons it served and the activities it developed. The accommodation consisted of a large hall for 250 people with stage and dressing-rooms, a games' or common room, an office, a kitchen, an entrance hall used also as a public lounge, and lavatories and cloakrooms.



The Assembly Hall was not large enough for many occasions. It originally had a smaller stage which was enlarged by members. A good stage and dressing-rooms were provided later. The latter were divided by a sliding and folding partition so that they could be thrown into one room and used for meetings. There was storage space under the stage which was used for both stage properties and chairs. There was also storage space under the Hall floor reached through a trap door.

The Games Room was used for whist drives, darts, and as a library on two days of the week. This was originally the billiards room and was furnished with old-fashioned benches covered in black leather. As a members' room it left much to be desired. There was no attempt at colour schemes or cheerful decorations. Comfortable chairs, bright colours, and a fireplace would do much to make it a happier room. It had a southern aspect and was a good shape fundamentally.

The warden's office was larger than it need be and not well planned or equipped. A much smaller room with plenty of built-in cupboards and shelves would have been more useful. It should have been at the front of the building where it overlooked the entrance to the Centre. In this position the office would also have had a southern aspect, the benefits of which now go to the male and female lavatories. These lavatories, which flanked the entrance as they do in so many Centres, would have been equally accessible if they had been at the rear of the building and next to the Kitchen.

The Kitchen, incidentally, was reported to be too small for its purpose. Valuable space was occupied by a passage and counter at one side where members lined up to get refreshments. A small hatch for the sale of cigarettes and sweets opened into the Hall, but there was no hatch serving the big hall.

Underneath the Kitchen was a boiler house and storage room for garden tools. Under the stage were lockers and lavatories for men and women, which were used in connection with the tennis courts and other outdoor sports. Under the dressing-rooms was an air raid shelter.

The Entrance Hall was worth mentioning because it was the most cheerful room in the Centre. With its red tiled floor and groups of tables and chairs it managed a gay character of its own. It was used extensively by members who dropped in for a cup of tea and occasional meals. Everyone who came to the Centre entered this room at once and passed through it to reach other rooms. A cafe does not make an ideal traffic-way and congestion was the inevitable result.

The greatest criticism of the Manor Centre was the lack of suitable rooms for committee meetings and small group activities. The dressing-rooms could be used for these purposes, but they were inaccessible and by no means ideal. It would have been almost impossible to add such rooms without a radical alteration of the plan. The Entrance Hall was the only means of circulation in the building and it was already entirely surrounded by rooms.

#### 4. Construction, Finishes and Equipment :

The Manor Centre was of brick construction with the exterior walls finished in pebbledash to a height of about twelve feet. Above that there was a pseudo half-timbered effect which was not only unattractive in itself but did

not even have the merit of being akin to the architectural style of the surrounding housing estate. Interior walls were finished in plaster and the ceilings were lined with a cream-coloured plaster board. The truss in the hall was also covered in this plasterboard which makes it appear unnecessarily heavy and clumsy.

The floors in the Games' Rooms and Warden's Office were of wood covered with linoleum. Entrance Hall, Kitchen and Lavatory floors were tiled. The Main Hall had a maple floor, but it was laid the short way of the room which is less suitable for dancing than for physical training.

There was central heating throughout the building and an electric heating point in the Warden's Office. In the Kitchen there was a boiler for water and an Ascot heater at the sink.

The furniture in the Centre was drab and lacking in character. Wooden chairs were used except for the leather-covered benches in the members' room.

#### SOUTHGATE COMMUNITY CENTRE, MIDDLESEX

The Centre was opened in 1935 and was built by the Local Authority. Last spring plans were being made for the Middlesex County Council to undertake the maintenance of the building and ground.

##### 1. Situation :

The Community Centre is on a good corner site in a new housing estate of 300 Council cottages, and adjacent to other community buildings such as the county school, the county library, and the school clinic. The school playing fields are opposite the Centre, and a large playing field and football pitch used by the Community Association are nearby. The Bramley Recreation Ground is close to the Centre. The grounds surrounding the building are used for allotments since the war. There is a tennis court behind the building with a tarmac surface. There is a hedge along the side of the site and a low brick wall in front. The narrow strip of ground in front is covered with rough grass with no sign of a garden. On the corner there is a bulletin board where current activities at the Centre are advertised. This seems an excellent idea and a good use of the opportunity offered by a corner site on one of the main approach roads to the estate.

##### 2. The Centre and the Community :

Before the war the membership was between 250 and 300, but there has been a great drop. As the young men are called up, the young women drift away from the Centre, too. The membership is not limited to residents on the estate and those who come from other areas apparently mix well with the local residents. The greatest problem here is how to separate the different age groups because the building is so small.

##### 3. Planning :

The Centre includes an Assembly Hall, a small Hall, a Common Room, a Billiards Room, a Canteen, and a Committee Room, as well as the necessary cloak-rooms and lavatories.



The Assembly Hall is used for dances, whist drives, plays, concerts, wedding receptions, etc. It has a good stage with excellent lighting. There are dressing-rooms and lavatories behind the stage but no passageway, which means that full use cannot be made of the depth of the stage. At one end of the hall there is a gallery with a sloping floor to provide extra seating. Acoustics are reported to be very good. There are no echoes and people in all parts of the Hall can hear plainly. The Hall is directly opposite the main entrance to the building which, in a Centre of this size, is an excellent solution. It is not immediately adjacent to any of the members rooms, but the problem of noise transmission is acute here.

The smaller hall is used for socials and dances. It is furnished with a piano and folding chairs and tables of wood. There is a service hatch through from the Kitchen. There is no welcoming atmosphere about the room. It is obviously an all-purpose room.

The Kitchen, which is reported to be small for the work it has to cope with, lies between the small and the large Halls, but does not serve the latter directly. Instead it has a counter serving into the entrance corridor. There is a door to the Kitchen at the rear which is useful for bringing in supplies.

The Billiards Room possesses a three-quarter size and a smaller billiard-table and a darts board. It is also used for small group meetings. Like the Common Room it is extremely utilitarian in character in spite of its games accessories.

The Committee Room is a small, neat place furnished with some incredible pieces of old-fashioned furniture. Perhaps it is the old mahogany and the trim shelves of files and papers that give this room more life and atmosphere than most of the others.

There is storage space for chairs under the stage, and it can be reached from below and outside the Centre. There are also three large store cupboards on the balcony.

#### 4. Construction :

The Centre is of brick and timber construction and has a solid, well-built appearance. The exterior walls are finished in dark red brick of good colour, but there is a half-timbered effect over the main entrance which is out of character with the rest of the building and the houses on the estate. Interior walls except in the Assembly Hall are finished in plaster. There is a chair rail in all rooms except the Hall to prevent damage to the plaster. In the large Hall the interior walls are finished in a red brick and left unpainted. Such a wall is, of course, practically undamageable and does not show dirt easily. The Hall looked as fresh and new as if it had just been opened, but reports say that members find the brick walls cold and unwelcoming.

Floors in the Common and Billiards Rooms are of deal boards. The entrance hall is floored with unglazed tiles. In five years the surface had worn off the tiles. In the large Hall there is a maple floor, with the boards running the long way of the room.

Windows are of the casement type with timber frames. There is central heating throughout, and the boiler house is under the stage and reached from outside the building.

In the Hall timber trusses support the roof, and compoboard is used as a lining to the ceiling. Folding wooden chairs are used in the Hall and in other rooms of the Centre.

#### PARISH SOCIAL CENTRE, SWINTON, LANCs

Although it is not a Community Centre to the extent of being non-sectarian this Centre fulfils many of the vital functions of a community building and, architecturally, has interesting features.

The building is the result of a long-standing dream on the part of Canon D. Fletcher, the Vicar of Swinton. It is he who has been the inspiration behind the scheme and has made the Centre a financial possibility. It was completed in 1938.

#### Planning and Construction :

The accommodation includes an Assembly Hall, a Billiards Room, a Common Room, Kitchen, Lavatories, and Cloak-rooms.

The Hall is at one end of the building with access from an entrance hall which is rarely used except for dances and large gatherings. It can be divided by two sliding and folding partitions whose framework is covered with felt and heavy canvas in an effort (not successful) to make them sound-proof. These partitions are top hung and have a runway in the floor which can be covered with a slat to make a continuous floor for dancing. The auditorium has a low ceiling which spoils its appearance and makes it difficult to use for musical entertainments. The room is very long and turns the corner at one end which, combined with the low ceiling, gives it an uncomfortable atmosphere.

The Billiards Room is on the front of the building opening on to the long verandah. It is a sunny, cheerful room used intensively and easily reached from the side entrance to the Centre which seems to serve as the main point of access the greater part of the time. There is a Common or Committee Room at the back of the Centre with a service hatch from the kitchen. The Kitchen is some distance from the hall and cannot serve it directly. The cloakroom accommodation is poorly planned and too small (because lavatories are reached through the cloakrooms). There is insufficient storage space.

The plan in practice has not proved to be a good one for a social centre. The narrow dark corridor through the heart of the building is unpleasant, and the large entrance hall serving the auditorium is wasteful of space and seldom used. The Kitchen, though well planned and equipped in itself, is poorly situated.

In spite of defects in the plan, the interior of the Centre is gay and cheerful. It is well furnished, the windows are large and are hung with brightly-coloured curtains, and the walls are off-white in most rooms. In the Assembly Hall, the timber joists which support the roof are exposed and have been painted with decorative designs in reds and blues on a white background. Stacking metal chairs of bright red are used in the auditorium. A chair rail along the walls has been omitted and already the plaster is being damaged.

The building is of brick, timber and steel construction. The exterior



walls are finished in a dull red brick. The flat roof is economically constructed. The main beams are steel, slightly cranked to give falls for roof drainage. Intermediate joists are of timber, exposed on the interior and decorated. Wallboard insulation between the joists is fixed to the board roof which is felted externally. Interior walls are finished in an extremely rough plaster which is so coarse in texture as to be dangerous if rubbed against. This fact, of course, keeps people from touching the wall and dirtying it with fingermarks.

There is central heating throughout the building.

### WATLING COMMUNITY CENTRE, WATLING, MIDDLESEX

The Watling Community Centre was opened in 1933 on a London County Council Housing Estate and is an outstanding example of its kind, because it was built after considerable efforts on the part of tenants to secure social and communal facilities. The first Community Association (of friends from outside the estate), was formed in 1928 to promote social development on the estate. In 1930 the Association of Residents and the Association of Neighbours joined together in the Watling Association. In this year the New Estates Community Committee of the National Council of Social Service began to aid the Watling Association and helped to provide a salary for a full-time organising Secretary. In 1931 a four-roomed cottage was rented from the L.C.C. as headquarters for the community activities of the Watling Association. The present Centre was opened in 1933. Unfortunately, Watling is not controlled by a single local government because Ward and Estate boundaries do not happen to coincide. There are three Local Authorities responsible for Watling, which makes it difficult to promote a unified civic life and a spirit of civic pride.

The Pilgrim Trust gave a grant of £2,000 towards the Centre and loan of £700 repayable over a period of seven years. The Higher Education Committee of the Middlesex County Council pays three-quarters of the Organising Secretary's salary. The Association collected £500 for the Community Centre and borrowed £900 from the bank. Membership subscriptions are 4d. per month for the first member in a household and 2d. for each successive member. Management of the Centre is in the hands of a Council which is made up of one representative for each 40 members, and one for each constituent body. The Organising Secretary is the real administrator of the building and its activities. He keeps a watch over group programmes and leaders, helps and advises, and forms a strong link between the Centre and the larger aspects of the movement in the country as a whole.

#### 1. Situation :

The Centre is not near the important points of community life such as the station and shops. As a result, people do not come from far corners of the estate as they might if it occupied a more central position. The building is on a corner site, cut off from the houses around it by wide streets which are busy with traffic.

#### 2. The Centre and the Community :

Since 1936 full membership is reserved for persons over 18 years of age. Junior members are between fourteen and eighteen. Members of the Centre represent the upper income groups on the Watling Estate. Women are more active than

men and are in the majority. In 1939 the adult membership was 315, the youth membership 68, and that for children 282. The children's group is very active and there is a Veterans' Club with free membership for all residents over 65 years of age. This does not take into account the membership of affiliated bodies which is large.

As the estate grew, the need for facilities grew but before an adequate Community Centre could be built, other organisations stepped into the picture. There are now several meeting places which are more popular with some groups than the Centre is.

Among the regular members of the Association the attitude toward the Centre is fine. They are devoted to its service and spend as much time as possible in the building. This is particularly true of the officers and their wives and children.

### 3. Planning :

The original conception of the Community Centre was cut down for lack of finances and the present building started life with the knowledge that it would not be adequate for its purpose and that future extensions would be necessary. Criticism of that part of the Centre which exists to-day must, therefore, take into account the future plans.

The existing Centre is inadequate for its purposes in several ways. The chief lack is of separate accommodation for young people (the reason why they form such a small percentage of the membership). With no special room or wing of their own, they are in constant friction with the adults. The latest plans for additions include a special Youth Wing. The other great need, which will also be remedied when extensions are made, is for an Assembly Hall. The present one seats only 150 persons, which cuts down the scope of activities considerably. A gymnasium is included in future plans, and will fill a real need.

The two committee rooms are good in shape and can be used by many different groups for different activities.

The present Hall is only 45' x 25' with a few feet off one end for a platform stage. The temporary common room is 40' x 25', and at first glance it would seem that floor space would have been more reasonably used if the Hall had been made larger and the common room smaller. That would not have fitted in with the future plans for the building, however, and the original nucleus, already used for eight years and likely to remain as it is for some time, has had to suffer.

Behind the Hall is a Committee Room which can be reached only from the Hall, or from outside. Experience at the Centre has shown that noise is a nuisance factor when one room opens from another in this way. Despite this fact, the proposals for the future Centre include a common room which will in fact be a large central hall with other rooms opening directly off it. The Common Room has been planned in this way deliberately with the idea that it will be better able to act as a convenient rendezvous if members are passing in and out continuously.



#### 4. Construction :

The Centre is a one-storey building of brick and timber construction. Exterior walls are finished in rough surfaced red brick, and the interior walls in plaster. Floors are of wood blocks in jara and doors and trim are also of jara. Floors in lavatories and canteen are of composition. Window sills are tiled. Cooking in the canteen is done by gas and there is a gas fire in the office. The building is centrally heated.

#### PEARTREE COMMUNITY CENTRE, WELWYN GARDEN CITY, HERTS

The Peartree Community Centre was built by the Welwyn Garden City Urban District Council and was opened in July, 1938. The cost of erecting the building was £10,287, and of furnishing, £620. No government or private grants were received.

The Constitution of the Peartree Centre stipulates that its management shall be vested in (a) a Management Committee and (b) a General Committee. The former consists of four members of the Urban District Councils and three members of the General Committee, and is the policy forming body of the Community Centre. It may also designate which organisations may be represented on the General Committee. This latter Committee is made up of 12 persons nominated by the organisations using the Centre. It is apparent that the Urban District Council has been determined from the first to keep a firm and guiding hand on the life of the Centre through the medium of the Management Committee.

#### 1. Situation :

It is significant that the Community Centre has been called "Peartree" rather than "Welwyn Garden City". Welwyn, ideal though it is in many ways, is a sharply divided community. Few of our older, unplanned, and sprawling towns have more easily apparent class distinctions in their physical structure. The east is east and the west is west very definitely, the former being collectively termed "Peartree" and the latter "Parkway". In the early days of the Garden City, residential development took place mainly to the west of the L.N.E.R. railway tracks which cut through the heart of the City in such an uncompromising way. The small groups of council houses were not easily distinguishable from the other Welwyn cottages. As the town grew, however, the industrial area to the east of the railway line spread and the homes of the working-class group ed themselves around it with only an occasional more pretentious house devoted to the local doctor or dentist.

Community life on the Parkway side of town flourished. Welwyn seethes with societies and clubs of all kinds. Accommodation for these activities could be found in the local amateur theatre, the local hotel, or in the larger homes of members. In Peartree, however, to meet the social and cultural needs of the residents, a Community Centre was planned because an active community life did not spring up of itself.

The Centre is located in a newly-developed part of Peartree, over a mile from the railway station in the heart of Welwyn. It can, of course, be used by people and organisations from the Parkway side but its very situation makes that difficult. The site itself is good. The building is on a corner and has adequate open space around it.

## The Centre and the Community :

The Peartree Centre is not run on a membership basis, but is used by a large group of local organisations who rent the rooms for their meetings and activities. The General Committee, as representatives of these organisations, do their best to maintain a Community Centre spirit.

Until just before the war the Centre was controlled by a full-time manager under the supervision of the Housing Manager. Since that time it has been directly under the control of the Housing Department. There is a full-time caretaker and a part-time cleaner.

The Centre is used intensively every day. The organisations include the Roman Catholic Church, Church of England, Society of Friends, Girl Guides and Brownies, Boys' Clubs, Co-operative Guilds for Men and Women, numerous trade unions, and political parties, Left Book Club, Folk Dancing, Debating and Social Groups, etc. In addition to these there is a Poor Man's Lawyer, a Health Association Clinic, and a Family Planning Clinic. The General Committee runs dances and whist drives. An evacuation bureau is active at the Centre and evacuated mothers and children are frequent visitors. The Society of Friends and the Left Book Club are the chief visitors from the Parkway region.

Since the beginning of the war the Centre has been used more intensively than it was in peace time.

### 3. Planning :

The Peartree Centre consists of an Assembly Hall to seat approximately 300 persons, a stage, four committee or club rooms, a Kitchen, and the necessary cloakrooms and lavatories. The plan is a simple L shape.

The entrance to the Assembly Hall is the main means of access to the building and takes precedence on plan over the entrance to the wing containing two committee rooms and the kitchen. The Hall is a pleasant room with tall windows on one of the long sides and small clerestory windows on the other. The stage has overhead battens and footlights for ordinary use, and there is provision for portable electric control board to be used when additional lighting is required for dramatic performances. Behind the stage there are a small and a large dressing-room with a fixed partition between. These are used as committee rooms as well as for dressing-rooms. A small lavatory for women and one for men adjoin the dressing-rooms.

In the wing which adjoins the Hall at the stage end there are two large committee rooms with a central entrance and lobby between. The room at the far end of the wing has a girls' cloakroom and block of lavatories behind it, and a small separate entrance lobby. The girls' cloakroom and lavatories can be reached only from this lobby so that the end of the wing becomes in fact a Girls' Club. This was designed to meet special local needs, but if and when these needs change the arrangement may prove too inflexible. It might have been better to make the cloaks and lavatories for this section available from the central lobby of the wing so that they could be used at crowded hours in connection with some of the other rooms.

The three separate entrances to the Centre do make it easy to let the rooms to different bodies who can carry on with their activities quite independently of one another. The building is, in fact, an extension of the village hall plan, rather than a nucleus for a Community Centre.



The Kitchen, although placed in a central position in relation to the Hall and the four committee rooms, does not serve any one of them directly. Instead it is separated by a passageway from all the other rooms, a situation which experience at other Community Centres has shown to be undesirable.

In the basement, under the stage and dressing-rooms, there are a chair store and boiler room.

#### 4. Construction, Finishes, Equipment :

The Peartree Centre is mainly of brick and timber construction, but steel trusses are used in roofing the large hall. Exterior walls are finished in a red brick. The roof is hung with red tiles. The portico at the entrance to the hall is supported by timber columns and faced with timber boarding.

Interior walls are finished in plaster painted off-white. There is a hardwood floor in the Assembly Hall, laid the long way of the room for dancing. Lighting fixtures are simple globes suspended from the ceiling which is lined with an absorbent fibre board.

There is central heating throughout the building.

Folding wooden chairs are used in the hall. The windows are hung with curtains printed with gay-coloured patterns.

Interior colour schemes are bright and cheerful.

#### WALSTON HOUSE, WESTMINSTER, LONDON

Walston House was opened in 1937. Lady Walston, who is interested in housing and social work, felt that there was a great need for a community building on the Tachbrook Housing Estate. She was concerned in particular with the social needs of the young people. It was she who purchased the site (originally reserved for commercial development) and financed the building of the Community Centre.

The total cost of the building was about £8,000. No Government grants have been received for the cost of construction or for maintenance. Before the building was completed an appeal was made to friends and private charitable foundations for money to cover the cost of furnishing and equipment, and to start an Endowment Fund for running expenses. £900 was raised. Of this £200 came from London Parochial Charities, £500 from the Pilgrim Trust, £50 from the Goldsmiths Company, and £300 from the Westminster Housing Trust. £300 was put in the Endowment Fund.

#### 1. Situation :

Walston House is on the corner of Tachbrook Estate, a large group of block dwellings built by the Westminster Housing Trust. The members' door to Walston House is at the side of the building with access from one of the entrance roads to the Estate. The house, although on one corner of the Estate, is in a prominent position, easily reached by the tenants and by residents of the neighbourhood. It is on very expensive ground in an area of high population density. Consequently, it covers the site completely and has no gardens or grounds of its own.

## 2. The Centre and the Community :

The members of Walston House come not only from the Tachbrook Estate but from the surrounding residential areas. The war has meant a loss of the strong section of young people in their early twenties who used to be the warden's helpers. The group of fourteen to eighteen year olds is still very numerous and active. Dances and social activities have been badly hit by the loss of young men. Activities of Walston House include a Men's Club, a Football Club, a Women's Club, a Junior Girls' Club, a Boys' Club, a Children's Club, a Dramatic Club, a Discussion Group, and an Entertainment Committee which arranges dances, socials and whist drives.

London County Council Evening Classes are held at the Centre. They are of no financial benefit because student fees go to the L.C.C. The wardens agree that more lettings and fewer clubs and classes would not only increase the income of the Centre, but would make their own work much easier. They feel, however, that such a policy would spoil the whole spirit and aim of Walston House.

## 3. Planning :

Walston House is a square building with three storeys. On the ground floor the Westminster Housing Trust have their offices. There is also an office for the wardens which is the library as well. Books can be borrowed at given times with the warden's permission. There is an entrance from the street for visitors and the wardens, and for the Westminster Housing Trust. At the side, on the entrance road to the estate, is the members' door which has no outside handle and can be opened only by a doorkeeper from inside. This arrangement was felt to be necessary in the case of Walston House, and in spite of such precautions attempts are continually made to break open doors and windows. Fire escapes have proved to be an unofficial but easy means of access to the House. Members apparently enter in the normal way, under the approving eye of the doorman, and then run upstairs to admit friends through the fire-doors. Now, of course, the building is open at all times, sand and stirrup pump being available, and supervision is increasingly difficult.

On the first floor is an Assembly Hall which is used for dances, plays, and for physical training. The room is square in shape with four free-standing columns near the centre of the floor.

It is most unsuitable for a gymnasium and the columns are a great menace for dancers and people playing games. The wardens report that it is surprising how well the young people have learned to avoid the columns. It is even more surprising that the need for these columns was ever allowed to arise on the plan of the building.

Also on the first floor is a club room used by the Boys and Men. It is equipped with one billiards table, one table tennis trestle, dart boards, domino and draughts tables. There is a Class-room or Common Room which is used for discussion groups and for women's and young people's meetings. It is separated from the Canteen by a sliding and folding partition so that cookery demonstrations can be easily held. This class-room is entered through a cloakroom which is, in effect, an open passageway at most times. When the Hall is being used for dances or socials the cloakroom is cut off by a counter and an attendant is in charge. During intervals members and guests are permitted to pass through the Kitchen to the classroom beyond where refreshments are served.



This is a most inconvenient arrangement, and the result of a bad bit of planning.

On the second floor there is the wardens' flat which includes a sitting-room, bedroom, kitchen and bath.

On the roof there is a playground for children. The surface has been covered with asphalt and a brick parapet wall about nine feet high protects the children from danger. At intervals there is iron grill work in the wall to lighten the effect. The playground is used intensively in suitable weather and has proved a great success.

In the basement there are a number of rooms which, since the war, have been taken over by A.R.P. workers. The billiards room, for instance, is now an A.R.P. post although members at the time of our visit were still using it in the evenings. The workroom, formerly used for wood work, shoe repairing, etc., is now entirely devoted to A.R.P. Another small room, once used for handicrafts, is now the Air Raid Wardens' main office.

The boiler house is equipped with a caretakers bench which is an excellent idea and makes it easy for him to do minor repairs.

Walston House is fortunate in having a large storage room in the basement. It has wisely been fitted with numerous cupboards which can be used separately by the many clubs and groups. It is now used as a bedroom for helpers who have to stay the night if caught by an air raid.

#### 4. Construction, Finishes, Equipment :

Walston House is of brick and timber construction, the exterior walls being finished in a dull red brick. Interior walls are finished in plaster. In the front entrance and passage the walls are painted a dark blue at the base to form a dado which is capped by wood beading at a height of about three feet six inches. Above this point the walls are painted a light cream. The dark dado could have been even higher for the sake of cleanliness. In the Assembly Hall the walls are lined with wood panelling up to a height of seven and a half feet. The panelling has proved to be a tough and hard-wearing surface, but it was unfortunately left in a natural, unfinished state. Dirt rubbed into the bare surface of the wood and it was necessary for members to scrub the surface, rub it with steel wool and finally finish with linseed oil before a satisfactory wall lining was obtained.

Floors of the entrance halls, passages and most rooms are covered in heavy linoleum. In the large hall the floor is of deal blocks and has proved unsuitable for play centres and physical training classes. It is reported to be satisfactory for dances, but the blocks are coming up in many places and look dangerous.

The House is centrally heated throughout. The walls behind all radiators are covered with tiles up to a foot above the radiators. This scheme not only keeps the walls clean but looks attractive.

